# Interview with Jean C. Vance

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Foreign Service Spouse Series

JEAN C. VANCE

Interviewed by: Margaret Sullivan

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*Q: Let's start, Jean, with the manuscript. What propelled you to write it? We all feel that maybe we ought, but most of us never do.*

VANCE: I've always enjoyed writing, and I had written a lot of short stories, and done translations, and my husband was writing his memoirs and he said, “Why don't you write your memoirs, and then we'll combine them together in a book?” And it is a book about the Foreign Service because Sheldon and I were married well before he went into the Foreign Service. We were together in the Foreign Service for 35 years, from 1942 until 1977, and the life in the United States and in the world changed during that time, and certainly the life in the Foreign Service. Thirty-five years ago is very different from the life in the Foreign Service today, and we thought it would be interesting for people to read about. We've had a lot of very exciting experiences traveling to different parts of the world, and immersing ourselves in other cultures, and that was our idea.

*Q: I think it's a super idea, and I hope you find a publisher. There are two in Washington that might be interested and we can talk about that off the tape. Let's back up now. You said you had been married for a while before you joined the Foreign Service. Tell me about the period leading up to your coming into the Foreign Service.*

VANCE: Sheldon and I both graduated from Carleton College and that's where we met. We were married in December 1939 during his first year at Harvard Law School and at that time there weren't many married students. I think that our families frowned on the marriage; they were very happy that I was going to marry Sheldon, and Sheldon's family was happy with me. But they thought we were very young to be married. I worked at Harvard University while Sheldon was in law school, and then in 1942 the war broke out and several of Sheldon's classmates were going into the Foreign Service — he had graduated from Harvard Law School with honors, came to Washington and was interviewed, and our first post was Brazil. He went down as a junior economic analyst. We went down in December of 1942. Sheldon was 4-F so he was unable to serve in the Army.

*Q: Let's back up a minute. While you were at Harvard you say you worked. What did you do?*

VANCE: I was the secretary for the mathematics department at Harvard College; I sort of ran the professors, and typed their manuscripts, interviewed the students. I was the administrator of the mathematics department.

*Q: When you went to Carleton, it was still not usual for women to go to college in the United States.*

VANCE: Oh, yes, I think so.

*Q: It was more than it had been, but not in the large common expectation that you have today where everybody — or maybe I'm mistaken.*

VANCE: I think you're mistaken because in my little town it seemed to me all my friends went to college.

*Q: Your little town was?*

VANCE: Blue Earth, Minnesota.

*Q: That's a lovely name.*

VANCE: It's an Indian name.

*Q: When you went to college what was your expectation for yourself?*

VANCE: I wanted to study and to learn history, art, and music, and have the world open up for me.

*Q: But it wasn't in expectation of a career of any sort.*

VANCE: I don't think so. Well, I expected to be employed, and I was employed as a personnel director at Carleton College, and trying to get interviews for graduating students for positions.

*Q: This was after you graduated?*

VANCE: After I graduated I worked in the Department of Personnel and Placement. I majored in economics and I thought maybe I could be a stock broker. I had great ideas about what I was going to do.

*Q: And then you met Sheldon.*

VANCE: I met Sheldon at Carleton.

*Q: And the great idea shifted. Any sense of loss in that?*

VANCE: No, I don't think so because I consider I had a career in the Foreign Service. I think a wife is very important, and for years the government really got two for the price

of one. I think that I worked very hard. I don't know whether I was appreciated the way I should have been by the Department, but I consider that I did have a career.

*Q: You went from Massachusetts to Brazil...*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: As not quite a bride.*

VANCE: No.

*Q: What was it like? This was wartime, what was it like just getting there?*

VANCE: We flew on a DC-3, and it took us four days to get there. We couldn't fly at night so we flew from Miami to Puerto Rico, and from Puerto Rico to Trinidad, from Trinidad to Belem, and from Belem to Rio.

*Q: Belem?*

VANCE: Is in Brazil at the mouth of the Amazon River. We stayed every night in a hotel and we would get up at first dawn, or really before dawn, because the plane would leave as soon as the sun rose. Then we would fly all day, it was a very slow plane.

*Q: DC-3s are not the world's most comfortable plane.*

VANCE: After four days we arrived in Rio and we stayed in a hotel while we looked for an apartment. We hadn't known we were going to go there so we had to learn Portuguese, and adjust to living in a foreign country. I had never been out of the United States before, so this was a really big change for me.

*Q: Before you went, was there training for you?*

VANCE: No. I don't think the Foreign Service Institute existed, and there certainly were no courses for the wives.

*Q: So no one said anything to you at all.*

VANCE: No one said anything. We were told to get our calling cards, and in Brazil during the war no one had a car because there was no gasoline, so we were dependent on using the bondes, or the old fashioned open-air street cars, or the lotacaos. I did my calls, which was amazing. I had a map of the city, and the American women, and the Brazilian women were scattered over a great distance. I made my calls on the street car, this was my mode of transportation. I had my white gloves, and my hat, and my calling cards on the streetcar. I called on maybe 50 people because Sheldon was the most junior of all the officers and this was very important, I was told, to call on the wives of all Sheldon's superior officers.

*Q: It's a good way to meet people.*

VANCE: It's a good way to meet people, and to learn about the city. Q: If that was the way you were going to have to get around, that's the way you had to do it. How did you manage that in the beginning without speaking Portuguese? VANCE: Well, I managed, and then we got a tutor and studied Portuguese and very quickly, within six months, we could speak it. I was delighted, I had so much more confidence in myself when I could understand Portuguese because to begin with waiting in line in the grocery store, or waiting in line to get the streetcar, the women would be talking Portuguese and they would look at me and I always thought maybe they were discussing me. After I learned the language I found out that I was very insignificant, they weren't paying any attention to me at all. But it's fun to be able to talk to people. It's terrible to be in a country, or anywhere, and not be able to converse with people.

*Q: As you think back on Brazil, what was it like as a wartime city?*

VANCE: There was rationing, but nothing very severe. The Brazilian government initially sent an expeditionary force that fought in Italy, and it was the only South American country that did this. Our Embassy encouraged the Brazilian government to do this, to enter the war on the side of the allies, and not the Axis.

*Q: Did the fact that the world was at war affect the diplomatic life you led?*

VANCE: I don't think so. This was very strange. I don't think so.

*Q: So what was the diplomatic life like?*

VANCE: I thought it was very exciting. There were parties, there were nightclubs, and we could go to the Copacabana Palace for a dinner and an evening of dancing for about $5.00 apiece. So we didn't suffer in that respect, but we couldn't travel. We were there for four and a half years without being able to return to the United States. We could not talk to our parents, or to anyone in the United States, by telephone and our letters were censored. But the Brazilians didn't seem to be bothered at all by the war. I don't think that their life changed much, and I don't think our life changed particularly.

*Q: Your husband went to the office and did what diplomats do, what did you do?*

VANCE: I taught English at USIS, and I was paid for doing that. And then I studied Portuguese, and Robert was born very soon after we arrived.

*Q: You went down pregnant?*

VANCE: No, I was not pregnant when I went down, but I was pregnant very soon afterwards. I had Robert to take care, and the American women worked in the Red Cross, we rolled bandages — got together and did that.

I took cooking lessons at the gas company, and the reason I did this was not particularly to learn how to cook, but to learn the language and to meet Brazilian women. That was very interesting for me.

*Q: And when you taught, was this an unusual thing for the wives in the Embassy to teach, or were there several of you?*

VANCE: I think I was the only one who did this.

*Q: And what did they pay you?*

VANCE: I think it was $10.00 a week.

*Q: Mad money.*

VANCE: Yes, that's right. But it was fun because I could get on the streetcar, go into the city, and have a different life. It gave me something very interesting to do.

*Q: And you did it the whole four years?*

VANCE: I don't think so, I can't remember. I don't think I did do it for the four years.

*Q: I'm assuming you had some help in the house.*

VANCE: Yes, we had one maid who lived in.

*Q: In a small apartment?*

VANCE: In a small apartment. She had a little room off the kitchen, and we had two bedrooms, and a dining room, and a very small living room. We lived right on Ipanema Beach on the first floor and we could look out our windows at the ocean. It was beautiful. Rio is a very, very nice city.

*Q: In thinking of the Embassy as a whole, what was demanded, or expected, of you as a Foreign Service wife?*

VANCE: I was expected to make the calls, and then we entertained one another. We were expected to get to know the Brazilians, and to have a good rapport with the Brazilians.

*Q: Who told you that you were expected to do this?*

VANCE: Mrs. Dowling, and Mrs. Simmons, and the wife of the Deputy Chief of Mission, and the wives of the different section chiefs.

*Q: And they literally took you in hand and told you this.*

VANCE: Yes, they told us just what to do.

*Q: And you assumed that was their job, and you accepted it*

VANCE: Yes, exactly, of course. We did just what we were told to do. I remember we would attend big receptions at the embassies, and at the other different places where official parties were being given, and Brazilians and people from other embassies were invited, and we would be invited also. And we were told that we should mix. I remember when I was pregnant talking to another woman who was pregnant, and one of the senior wives coming up and saying, “Now, you should not do this. You're not to talk to one another. You're to talk to the foreign guests.” We were told to make a good impression.

*Q: Were you told what to wear?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Down to colors and things?*

VANCE: No, no. But they did want everyone to look nice.

*Q: Was there a morale factor involved in this? Was it a positive thing, or negative?*

VANCE: I think it was positive. We never questioned what we were to do.

*Q: Was it done nicely?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Because one hears stories of dragon ladies.*

VANCE: No, I don't think these were dragon ladies. We had a very good time together.

*Q: How large a post was it?*

VANCE: It was the largest American post in World War II, except for London. It was the second largest post. I think there were hundreds of officers.

*Q: Why was it so big?*

VANCE: Because there were a lot of Japanese, and a lot of Germans and Italians who were living in Brazil, and they were supporting the Axis powers, naturally, their countries. They were sending them money, and they were sending them supplies. And also, the U.S. was very afraid that maybe Brazil would go into the war on the side of the Axis, because of the Japanese, and the Italians, and the Germans living in Brazil. There's a big hump of land in Brazil extending into the Atlantic Ocean, and we wanted to ferry our planes to North Africa from Brazil. That was the shortest distance across the Atlantic. So it was very important to have Brazil on our side during the Second World War.

*Q: Did you get involved in this as well, or you just knew this was happening*

VANCE: I just knew this was happening.

*Q: When you think back on Brazil, what are the real highlights of having been there at that time?*

VANCE: I think the birth of our son. There was one bachelor in the Embassy who did have an automobile. He was a rather senior officer, and he came and drove Shelly and me to the hospital early in the morning when Robert was born. That was very exciting. And another thing; there's an Itabira iron range in the province of Minas Gerais and Sheldon had majored in geology, among other things when he was at Carleton, so he was to go up and inspect the iron mines to see if this iron could be used for our war machines — for manufacturing things in the United States. He was flying up, it was a one motor plane, but there was an extra seat, so he said, “Why don't you come along with me?” I thought that would be just great because we had been there about two and a half years and I hadn't been out of Rio. So we planned to do this, and the one motor plane stalled over the rain forest. The Brazilian pilot panicked, and he kept throttling the engine and finally the plane caught at tree level, and we were able to rise again, and arrive at the Itabira iron range. I've often thought, “Wouldn't it have been terrible if we had crashed in the rain forest?” We never would have been able to get out, and Robert was a little baby at that time. I don't think that our parents could have come down to get him. I don't know really what would have happened. So that was very dramatic.

We used to take ferry boats and go to the islands in the Rio de Janeiro bay, and that type of thing. The rain forests were just beautiful, the hillsides were covered with very luxuriant vegetation and orchids, and beautiful butterflies. So that was fun on Sundays, and when we had time off. We would take a streetcar up into the mountains.

*Q: Was Rio then anywhere near as large a city as it is now?*

VANCE: No, I don't think it was.

*Q: Have you been back since?*

VANCE: No.

*Q: When Robert was born what was the hospital?*

VANCE: It was a Brazilian hospital, I had a very nice private room but at that time we weren't very fluent in Portuguese so this made it difficult with the nurses, and my doctor spoke no English, it was just Portuguese. The Brazilian women were in suites, and mother, and the parents of the father would have adjoining suites, so they were there to take care of the woman who had just had the baby. And I had no one, and it was very difficult for my friends to come and visit me in the hospital. But Sheldon came, of course; he was working, but he would come at night and there was a bed underneath my bed, and he would sleep in the hospital with me at night, and take care of me.

*Q: How long were you in the hospital?*

VANCE: I think two weeks.

*Q: It was a different world, wasn't it? But you felt the medical care was good?*

VANCE: I think so.

*Q: And what about ordinary shopping, and eating?*

VANCE: Our oven was very small so if we ever had a turkey, or big roast when we were entertaining, we had to carry it to the bakery to have it baked. But I think this was true in all Brazilian homes. The bakery was used as an oven, the commercial bakery. I would go to the open market and buy our fruit and vegetables, and canned goods, and things like that.

*Q: You mentioned rationing.*

VANCE: Sugar was rationed, but in an enormous amount. I think one person got two kilos a week. The Brazilians complained, but we could never use our ration because we didn't eat that much sugar.

*Q: That's a sugar producing country, isn't it?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: By the end of your four and a half years did you get to travel more than just to the iron mines?*

VANCE: No, I think that's all. My husband traveled some, but I didn't.

*Q: Is there some regret in that?*

VANCE: No. I mean I always loved to travel, but it was during the war and it was impossible. We weren't permitted to do it, and we just accepted that.

*Q: And what was it like to come back home at the end of that tour?*

VANCE: It was very exciting. And then I was expecting Stephen at that time, and Robert had an ear infection, and we had really a very difficult trip coming home. It was the same thing; we came home on a DC-3 and it took us four days from Rio to get to Miami. Then we stayed in Miami because I was ill, and Robert was ill. Then we took the train back to Minnesota.

*Q: And were they interested in what you'd done?*

VANCE: Our parents were very interested, and our friends for a while were interested in our adventures.

*Q: Did you have much vacation before you...*

VANCE: We had six weeks.

*Q: After four and a half years.*

VANCE: After four and a half years, and then we went to Nice, France, and we went over on a troop ship, and Sheldon was Vice Consul in Nice. That was really very interesting.

*Q: Well, let's talk about that a little bit. What was the troop ship like? Why a troop ship?*

VANCE: Because there weren't any passenger ships. We went to France in the summer of 1946; you couldn't fly across the Atlantic at that time. I don't think there were any planes that did that, so everyone had to go by ship. And Sheldon being in the government was entitled to go on a troop ship. I think there were some Army people on the ship, but they were mostly government officials who were going to different capitals in Europe. There were a lot of State Department people. And it was mess, we didn't have a choice of food, and the food wasn't very good.

*Q: And you had by that time a new baby?*

VANCE: No, Stephen was born in France after we got there, so I was pregnant, and Robert was two years old.

*Q: And it's five days?*

VANCE: I think it was seven days, because I don't think we went too fast. It was an ocean liner that had been converted to a troop ship and then reconverted.

*Q: Did they teach you French? Or did you have to learn French when you got there?*

VANCE: We had studied French, I had had four years of French. But when we arrived in Le Havre we had eleven pieces of luggage, and I was expecting a baby, and we had Robert. There were no porters and we got on the train at Le Havre to go to Paris, and

Sheldon had to carry the eleven pieces of luggage. It was very difficult. We all fended for ourselves, and he had to make trip after trip.

*Q: My husband did that with pieces of baggage getting off a train in Japan once, and they only stop for a minute and a half.*

VANCE: It seemed to me that Sheldon had to run very fast to get all those eleven pieces of luggage off. We were so afraid we were going to leave something because we took along canned milk for Robert because everything was rationed in France. And we had to take along a layette for Stephen — we didn't know it was going to be Stephen.

*Q: So you really had everything you needed.*

VANCE: We had to take our furniture with us when we went to Nice, and we took our furniture again when we went to Brussels. It was just when we went to Africa that we lived in government houses that were furnished.

*Q: Had you taken furniture to Brazil?*

VANCE: Oh, no. During the war we could just take one suitcase. So we had very few things with us, maybe some photographs, but no books, or treasured objects at all. We could just take down one suitcase.

*Q: Then the six weeks that you were home you were busy buying...*

VANCE: We purchased furniture.

*Q: How did you finance that?*

VANCE: I think our parents helped us, to tell the truth, because we had to buy beds, and dining room furniture, and davenports. We had to buy everything. We didn't have any furniture.

*Q: For space you hadn't seen, and didn't know what it was going to be like.*

VANCE: Exactly.

*Q: Do you still have any of that furniture?*

VANCE: Yes. You're sitting on one of the chairs.

*Q: It's very comfortable. Re-upholstered.*

VANCE: Re-upholstered.

*Q: So you got to Nice, but your furniture was still on the high seas. Had it been on the same ship?*

VANCE: No, no. Our furniture arrived maybe three months after we arrived. So we arrived with no automobile — we had also bought a car in the United States and had it shipped to France.

*Q: What was your husband earning at that stage?*

VANCE: I don't know. In Brazil it was 53,000 a year, I think.

*Q: And that went handsomely?*

VANCE: Yes, in Brazil it went very well. In Nice we managed also.

*Q: But the point of my question was, that here you had had to lay out at least one and maybe two years worth of salary in terms of getting a car, and furniture, and all of that before you even went.*

VANCE: That's right. And I'm sure the State Department did not help. We maybe could have gotten a loan from the State Department; I think our parents helped us.

*Q: So what did you do? When you first got to Nice you lived in a hotel?*

VANCE: No, we lived in a furnished apartment that the Consul had been able to rent for us. And then we looked for a house, and we were able to find a very, very nice place on the outskirts of Nice — right in the carnation fields. When our furniture arrived, we moved into our house.

*Q: How large a Consulate?*

VANCE: There was one other Vice Consul, a Consul and two Vice Consuls, and local staff.

*Q: So this was a very different social experience.*

VANCE: Oh, it was very different from being in a large Embassy. There were no young Americans. There were some old Americans — the men had served in the First World War, and they had retired and were living in France, but there were no young Americans. So we were completely dependent on French friends, and I think this was very nice. We made some very, very nice friends.

*Q: Was that slow?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: How did you go about it?*

VANCE: There were people to begin with who were in the French Prefectural Service, the Damalons we still see. They are very, very close friends of ours — Simone and I were in the hospital together having our babies, so that was a way of getting acquainted with her. And Sheldon saw Pierre Damalon for business reasons because he was the Vice Prefect of the Alpes Maoitimes province. They introduced us to friends of theirs, and of course, we

were still struggling with the language because I could read and write French, but it was very difficult for me to speak French. Again, we hired a tutor and worked very hard on it.

*Q: And you paid for the tutor.*

VANCE: We paid for the tutor. We paid for the tutor in Brazil also. The State Department did not help us.

*Q: And when you came through Washington on your way to France, or did you come through Washington?*

VANCE: I think we did, I can't really remember.

*Q: But there was no training for you then either?*

VANCE: No, no.

*Q: What about cards, and things? You were expected to go through all of the calling rigmarole?*

VANCE: Yes, but there weren't very many people to call on in Nice, because there was just the Consul and his wife, and that's all. I don't think I called on the people in the French government. We got to know them, but I did not make formal calls on them.

*Q: Now, living in post-war France must have been in fact more of a privation than living in Brazil.*

VANCE: It was, and it was very interesting because in France everything was still rationed. Pasta was rationed, and milk was rationed, and eggs and butter. I would go into a grocery store and I was always put at the head of the line because I was very pregnant and they would say “vous ettes embarasse, madam,” and I would be allowed to go to the very front of the line. They were always very gallant about that.

I had my ration cards because you see we weren't in the United States during the war at all, so I did not have to worry about rationing in the United States. But in France it was very, very severe; no coal, for instance. We had a coal furnace and it was very difficult to get coal to heat the house.

*Q: What did you do? Wear heavy clothes?*

VANCE: We wore heavy clothes, and then we did get coal. I think we got it from the Navy because there were a lot of United States Navy ships in the Mediterranean at that time, and they had coal, and I think that we got coal from them at one time. Later on we were able to buy it but not in great quantity.

*Q: You had two small children so that sort of was your focus.*

VANCE: Yes, but we did a lot of traveling, and I took French lessons, and we entertained each other — our French friends — and we had parties. And then also, we did a lot of entertaining when the Navy was there, the Admirals, and the Captains, and we would have their counterparts in the French Navy; and we gave big dinner parties at home, and they were very formal. We had several courses, and finger bowls, and candles, and fresh flowers, and different kinds of wine, and everyone had to be seated according to protocol rules. So I had a lot of responsibility as far as that was concerned.

*Q: And you did it all physically, or did you hire people?*

VANCE: I had very good help. I had a cook all the time, a full-time cook, and a full-time houseboy.

*Q: Did you enjoy managing a household in that way?*

VANCE: I thought it was fun.

*Q: But you did the shopping, or did they?*

VANCE: I did most of the shopping because I liked to do that, and then they did some of the shopping, it depended.

*Q: Did you serve French sorts of meals, or did you serve...*

VANCE: We served French meals because my cook was French, and that's what was expected. The French loved to have good things to eat.

*Q: Did you study French cooking too?*

VANCE: Yes. I learned a lot about French cooking, but I didn't do the cooking myself. I had a very good French cook.

*Q: Mid-western food, as I grew up on it, is wholesome and tasty, and relatively plain, and simple. And to get thrown into the complexities of French food psychology...*

VANCE: I know, because we would start out with soup, and then you had the fish, and then you had either poultry or meat, and then an elaborate dessert, and salad, and cheese was served with the salad — many, many courses and served very formally. That was what the French expected.

*Q: How did you learn to do that?*

VANCE: I don't know. I just observed. I planned the meals because we would be invited out and then I would get ideas about what I was going to serve.

*Q: What was it like the first time you gave a dinner party after you got to Nice?*

VANCE: I always worried that something would go wrong, but it didn't.

*Q: I'm sure not, but were you particularly nervous with the first dinner party?*

VANCE: No, I don't think so. I just thought it was a lot of fun to do.

*Q: What were the highlights ... this was three years, wasn't it*

VANCE: We were there three years. We did a lot of traveling and I think it was mostly our contacts with the French people that I found the most interesting. As I said, there were no young Americans in the community. We went to Monte Carlo, we didn't gamble but Sheldon was accredited to the principality of Monaco so we would go over there for very elaborate occasions. And one time I sat next to Prince Ranier when he was very young, he was probably in his twenties.

*Q: It was his father then that was the ...*

VANCE: His grandfather, Prince Louis.

*Q: Was there a lot of ... yes, you would go over there occasionally, but in Nice itself was there a lot of that kind of very formal thing that you went to?*

VANCE: It seemed to me there was because even in the French homes that was the way we were entertained also.

*Q: And these dinners were formal not only in the sense of...*

VANCE: Oh, black tie, yes. We wore long dresses.

*Q: Expected to have a large wardrobe.*

VANCE: I did not have a large wardrobe, but many of the women did. The French women loved to dress beautifully, and they are very style conscious. And then, of course, I had the two children and did a lot with them.

*Q: Was there a kindergarten, nursery school?*

VANCE: I don't think any children went to nursery school in those days. Robert wasn't old enough to go to a real school.

*Q: He was five when you left. So you didn't pick up with teaching English or any of the sort of working things that you had done?*

VANCE: No, I did not because there weren't those facilities. It was a Consulate and there was no USIS, or anything like that.

*Q: And it was a Consulate that mainly dealt with the fact that Nice is a major port.*

VANCE: Exactly, and at that time there were a lot of naval visits, and a lot of time was spent on that.

*Q: And then where did you go from Nice?*

VANCE: We went to Martinique after France, and then we came back to Washington. And when we were in Martinique I did teach the Calvert system to Robert.

*Q: Did you get home leave between Nice and Martinique?*

VANCE: Yes. We always spent six weeks home leave, but we had no local leave. We did not return to the United States until our tour was finished.

*Q: So, for three years you were there, and that was that. Did your family come visit you?*

VANCE: Yes. My mother and father and Sheldon's mother came to visit us.

*Q: What was Martinique like then?*

VANCE: Well, there was no airport, and there were no tourist hotels. And, again, the Consulate was on the second floor of a very decrepit building downtown. We had a nice house in the hills on the route de Didier. We met a lot of very interesting old French families, and we were invited to plantation homes for weekends, and we would go for Sunday dinners and the children were always invited. The Consulate was very short staffed, so I would go down and help out at the Consulate. I wasn't paid for doing this, but it was sort of fun to do.

*Q: By "helping out" you mean what?*

VANCE: There was a bulletin board for photographs of interesting events in the United States — for instance, the photograph of our president, something important that was happening in the United States, so the people of Martinique would become acquainted with the American culture — so I chose the photographs and arranged the bulletin board. I think I typed, I did things like that when the secretary was ill, or the secretary had departed and the new secretary had not arrived. I answered the telephone, just anything that had to be done. It was a very good staff at the Consulate, but they were always short-handed.

*Q: How large a Consulate was it?*

VANCE: I think there were two Vice Consuls, and later on there was someone for USIS.

*Q: And Sheldon by then was the Consul?*

VANCE: He was the Consul, he was the boss.

*Q: Which meant that you had responsibility also for the senior official entertainment?*

VANCE: Yes, and there was quite a bit of official entertaining. We entertained the French officials.

*Q: Now, let's back up a little. You flew down to Brazil on a DC-3, you took a troop ship to France. How did you get to Martinique?*

VANCE: We flew, but we flew to Puerto Rico. There was no airport in Martinique so we flew to Puerto Rico, and then we took a pontoon plane.

*Q: How long a flight was that?*

VANCE: I think maybe four hours from Puerto Rico to Martinique.

*Q: Martinique is not a very large island is it?*

VANCE: No, but a very beautiful island, its volcanic, has beautiful beaches, and rain forests... It's now a Consulate General, and the Consul General lives in the same house we lived in.

*Q: What was it like?*

VANCE: Very nice. It was a big cement house, we had four bedrooms, and it was on a hill overlooking the city. It was very pretty, but not ostentatious or enormous — it had four bedrooms and two baths. Now there is a swimming pool but when we were there we did not have a swimming pool.

*Q: You taught the older ones school yourself?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: And you said you used the Calvert system. Can you tell us a little bit about how that worked?*

VANCE: I don't think it worked very well. Robert learned to read, and we had a great time doing that, but he was very bad in arithmetic. I had never had experience in teaching, and

it was one on one. He thought this was great fun, and I did too. But when we returned to the United States, and he entered second grade, he did not do very well because he wasn't used to being in a classroom situation, and he daydreamed. He was distracted by the other children. He just had not had the background to attend school in the United States.

*Q: Did the Calvert school give you directions for each lesson?*

VANCE: Yes, it did.

*Q: What had you done both in France and Martinique for playmates.*

VANCE: This was very difficult. In Martinique I felt the women I met, and the women who had children the age of our children, were all related to one another. They were always going to their grandparents, and to their great uncles for birthdays and anniversaries. Their lives were very full with their own families, and their own close friends. They were all related to one another — at least, that's the way it seemed to me. So it was difficult. I knew the wives of the French officials who were there for maybe two or three years. The principal of the Lycee, for instance, was a French women from metropolitan France. And the judges were from metropolitan France, and they would come on assignment to Martinique. It was an overseas department. I saw those women, and we were invited to the plantations — the sugar plantations. But I really didn't make many close friends among the Martiniques.

*Q: And what language were your children speaking at that time?*

VANCE: French. Well, we spoke English and French.

*Q: Have they maintained the bilinguatness?*

VANCE: Pretty much so.

*Q: What did you do with the little one? I mean, if you were teaching first grade, what did you teach the little one?*

VANCE: He would sort of hang around, or play outdoors. There were things for him to do.

*Q: And you had help there?*

VANCE: Oh, I had help.

*Q: Lots of it, including someone specially for children?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: We couldn't function otherwise, I'm sure. Did you travel elsewhere in the Caribbean while you were there?*

VANCE: Yes, because Sheldon was also responsible for Guadeloupe, which is a very nice island, very similar to Martinique so we would go over there together for official occasions, and to visit the Prefect in Guadeloupe because that was another department. We went to Trinidad, and Barbados. We traveled a lot in the Caribbean. I felt I got to know the Caribbean very well. And one time — we would always go by ship — we went by a banana boat and it was a very hot sultry evening and when we went into the dining room — we sat at a table — but during the dinner they put on overhead fans to stir the hot air, and my husband was very tall, stood up and oh, it was just terrible. I pulled him down. I saw in a flash that he was going to stand right up into this ceiling fan because my husband is very tall, and we weren't aware that these fans were going around. They had been started while we were having our dinner. The banana boat wasn't a passenger boat, but we did have a cabin, and it was an overnight trip to Guadeloupe.

*Q: Since you were the senior officer's wife, how did your life change?*

VANCE: I don't think it changed much when Sheldon was the Consul because there was only one other Consul in Martinique, and he was the British Consul. And I did know the wife of the British Consul. I don't think my life changed there. It did change when we went to Brussels, and when we were in Africa it was very different.

*Q: You had junior wives under you though?*

VANCE: No.

*Q: The other two were bachelors? So you were it.*

VANCE: I was it.

*Q: And what was it? Two or three nights out a week, and two or three nights giving dinners. Was it every night?*

VANCE: No, I wouldn't say every night, maybe three or four nights a week. We had no television or anything like that. There were no movies. So we would read in the evening, or go for walks, or do something like that.

*Q: Did you find it difficult to maintain a family life?*

VANCE: No, because Sheldon was home every noon for lunch. We always had lunch together with the children, and when we were home for dinner we ate with the children. I didn't feel that at all. I think when you're abroad it's easier to maintain a family life than when you're in Washington because here Sheldon worked very long hours at the State Department. Often times he wouldn't be home until 9:00 or 10:00 o'clock at night.

*Q: From Martinique you did come back to the United States after nine years abroad.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: What was that like?*

VANCE: I enjoyed it but it was a great disillusionment for me. In fact, I wrote an article for the Foreign Service Journal, June 1953, and it was called “Mrs. Foreign Service Officer, Class IV” on page 24, so I tell about returning to the United States, and looking for a house, and buying the groceries. It is very dated. It's very funny.

*Q: Why anonymous? You didn't dare put your name on it.*

VANCE: No, because I was afraid it would hurt Sheldon's career if people thought I was saying these things. I thought it was difficult to come back to the United States. When you're living abroad you idealize your own country, and you think that everything works, and that's it's going to be so delightful to be here. But the two boys weren't accepted by the gang in the neighborhood, they had to prove themselves. I think it was very difficult. Stephen was in kindergarten and he did very well because he started out that way, but then Robert did have trouble. He doesn't now, he has a Master's degree and everything turned out very well. But I think that first year was very heartbreaking for the children, and I tell about it in this article.

*Q: And you had to learn to keep house.*

VANCE: Yes, but that didn't bother me. In fact, I liked my independence.

*Q: When you came back here Sheldon worked at the Department?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Was there a wives infrastructure that you were expected to go call, and so on? Or were you sort of dumped and on your own?*

VANCE: I think I was sort of dumped and on my own, but I was a charter member of AAFSW and that was organized in 1960. So when we came back...

*Q: ... in '51.*

VANCE: ... there was no organization, and the Foreign Service wives I did meet were wives of colleagues of Sheldon.

*Q: Did you buy this house at that time?*

VANCE: Yes, it's the only house we've ever owned and we just hung on to it. And when we went overseas again to Brussels we rented, and very successfully. Our neighbor was the agent and we always had very good renters. And, of course, this was a way of hanging on to the house and paying the mortgage, and we've never regretted hanging on to the house.

*Q: I'm sure you haven't. You were here for three years?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: And during those three years the children were in school, and you were a traditional American homemaker.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: And not much a Foreign Service wife.*

VANCE: No.

*Q: And then you went back overseas. Now, when you went to Brussels your husband was the Political Counselor*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: ... in a major embassy, and you said your life changed.*

VANCE: Yes. I think it's always interesting to be in an embassy, but because he was Political Counselor we were invited to the Ambassador's residence for dinners, and receptions, very frequently. There was an American Women's Club, and I was very active in that and I got to know a lot of Belgian women. We would be invited to dinner at their homes, and then we would have them back for dinner at our home. So we did a lot of that. We did a lot of traveling, and the children were in school so I had responsibility as far as car pooling and getting the children to school, participating in the scout movement, and that type of thing. And, again, I took French lessons, because I think it's very important to speak the language, and to speak it fluently. I think it's very stimulating to do something like this. The military headquarters was just a half a block from our house and I was allowed to go over and take lessons with the military officers there, and that was very good.

*Q: Before you went to Brussels ... by then there were some things at FSI for women. Did they give you any training? Or did anybody suggest to you that...*

VANCE: I don't think then I did. Before we went to Ethiopia I took a course at FSI. But I could attend the course if there was a vacant chair, or something like that. If there were too many people, then I couldn't do it. This was on the continent of Africa, and they explained the geography, and where the mineral deposits were located, and the different tribal groups ... I can't remember, but it was for staff members in the Department of State who were going to Africa. I asked if I could take the course, and they said, “Well, if there's room you can.” But I always had to sit at the back of the room, and I couldn't ask questions or anything.

*Q: And you couldn't go if it was a classified lecture?*

VANCE: I guess not. I guess I could not.

*Q: I remember sitting in on one series of those and the most interesting things I couldn't go to, because they were classified. So you went to Belgium cold, as it were?*

VANCE: Yes, I think I did.

*Q: How did you get to Belgium?*

VANCE: Again by ship. I think we went over on the SS America.

*Q: Oh, so it was a proper ship?*

VANCE: A proper ship, a really beautiful ship, and we had a very good time.

*Q: Could you take the children into the dining room*

VANCE: Yes. Robert and Stephen had all their dinners, and lunches — I think we were on the first sittings so it wouldn't be too late for them. Then if we wanted to do something in the evening the steward on board ship would look in on them — they would go to sleep.

*Q: When you got to Belgium, you were still able to maintain a fairly good family life? Or was there a great deal of pressure for you to do other things, both in the daytime and in the evening?*

VANCE: The children were in school, and I don't think there was a lot of pressure on me to do things.

*Q: What was the Ambassador's wife like?*

VANCE: At first it was Mrs. Alger, and her husband was a auto company executive. And then, Kay Folger whose husband was Clifford Folger and he was chairman of the finance committee of the Republican party. They have a big stock brokerage firm here — I think it's

Folger & Fleming. She was just darling. I got to know her very, very well, and we did quite a few things together. She was very interested in going to art galleries, to concerts. I was very happy with that. There was no pressure on me.

*Q: For the first time, in a sense, you were in a major cosmopolitan city with the full arts life and all the rest of it.*

VANCE: Oh, yes. It was very, very interesting. There were wonderful art galleries, and then there were free noon concerts downtown that I attended. And, of course, I was taking French lessons again. Then there were tours, and lectures, given by the Women's Club. On weekends we would go off and visit the different chateaus and ancient cities, and we would go to the tulip fields in the Netherlands, and often to the Ardennes Woods — we'd take the children along. I enjoyed it very much.

*Q: And you were entertaining at home?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Still in the French formal manner?*

VANCE: Yes. Well, then not as much in the French formal manner. We gave several buffet parties, and they were very successful. We would have maybe twenty people for a buffet dinner — Belgians and Americans.

*Q: Was this your own innovation? I mean, were you the only one doing it at that point?*

VANCE: I think so. Not many people were doing that.

*Q: Do you remember what triggered...*

VANCE: I think we wanted to have more people. Sheldon had gone down to the Belgian Congo — at that time it was the Belgian Congo — and he had wonderful slides that he

had taken of his trip. He accompanied John Clifford Folger when he was invited down and Sheldon was the escort officer for Ambassador Folger. So we had maybe twenty Belgians over, and Sheldon would show his slides. That was very successful. It was a little different, and many of the Belgians had family in the Congo, and they had visited there. Maybe some of them had lived there, and this was very well received. That's when we started doing it.

*Q: And that was his first trip to what later became...*

VANCE: ...became Zaire after independence.

*Q: What was it like to work under a political — and a clearly political — Ambassador?*

VANCE: I think maybe there wasn't as much pressure because they had their own interests, and they had their own friends coming to visit them. Then our DCM was a bachelor, Philip Sprouse, so there really wasn't a wife riding herd on the crowd.

*Q: If anybody was, it was you.*

VANCE: In a way. Carolyn Adair also because her husband was senior to Sheldon. He was the Economic Counselor.

*Q: But Carolyn never rode herd on anybody.*

VANCE: ...on anyone, no, that's right. We were very good friends, and still are very good friends. So I had a very happy experience there.

*Q: Do you think that the notion of the overbearing senior wife.*

VANCE: I never had it.

*Q: That's part of what I was trying to get at. Do you think it was ... because it became a real factor later on when we got to the late '60s, early '70s, this idea was one of the things*

*that really pushed the Foreign Service into the declaration of rights for wives, or the Wives Directive?*

VANCE: I think it was the women's movement in the United States more than the oppression of the diplomatic system, if you could call it that. I think that the women were better educated, they had graduate degrees, and they wanted to have careers, and they wanted to be able to speak their own minds. One thing that ... well, in Martinique and Brussels ... you have to watch yourself all the time. The Foreign Service family is on display, and you have to be very careful about what you say. You can't give your opinions freely. And that's what I liked about being back in the United States, was the freedom I had to say what I thought. But that's what I think the women's movement ... that's why I was very enthusiastic about it because we were not able to ... well, I guess this in true even today. If a woman has independence, if her husband is representing the United States Government overseas, she can't say things just off the cuff, or what she would like to say. You have to be very guarded. And you want your children to behave properly.

*Q: What did you talk with your children about that? Because these classic stories about Foreign Service children who open their mouths and say things.*

VANCE: Oh, I know, you can't stop them from doing it.

*Q: Were you able to include the children in official things that you did much? Or did you have to leave them home?*

VANCE: Not really. We left them home. If we went away for a weekend ... we were invited to a country house of a Belgian friend, often times they had children the age of our children, and our children would be invited which was lots of fun. They played together, and they'd be outdoors. But for the official parties our children, no, were not present. They were up in their rooms.

*Q: Banging on the ceiling ...*

VANCE: ... banging, reading, or studying. And then when we were invited out to official parties, we never took the children.

*Q: And there were never sort of official parades and things in the daytime that you could take them to. So they really had a separate, independent existence?*

VANCE: Yes. And at the international school our two sons attended in Brussels, there were students of many different nationalities. They were English speaking, and the faculty was English, from England. I think there was one little Belgian boy in the school. But there were Belgian children on the street our children played with.

*Q: So they maintained the French? Then you were home again for four years?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: That must have been like a breath of fresh air again?*

VANCE: Again, yes. I've always liked coming back into the same house, and the same neighborhood.

*Q: The same neighbors.*

VANCE: Yes, and mostly the same neighbors. And then we went to church, and lived like Americans. It's very difficult ... when we were in Brussels we did attend some church services, but it was difficult, we went to the Scottish church there. In Martinique we didn't go to church because they were all Catholic churches.

*Q: Then you were here for four years, and by the time you went to Addis you had children who were in junior high school?*

VANCE: They were in high school, and Robert stayed with Jean and Donald McDonald, very good friends of ours. He was in his last year at Hawthorne School, but there were no

boarding facilities. And Stephen went to Landon for three years, so he was a sophomore at Landon, and this was very wonderful that Landon accepted him because they don't like to take students who were transfers. They want students who will continue through the whole twelve years. But they did this and it was really John Clifford Folger who talked to the people at Landon, and it was very nice of him to do. Stephen was a credit, he was an honor student at Landon, so it worked out very well. At that time there were boarding facilities there. There were 24 boys who lived in a big old stone house on the campus at Landon.

*Q: So you went to Addis without children.*

VANCE: Yes, for the first time. But then they came out ... we left to go to Addis in the fall, and the next summer Robert and Stephen came out. Robert spent a year because at that time ... well, he is a professional artist ... but he went to the Addis Ababa art school between high school and the Minneapolis School of Art and Design. But this was very interesting for us, and for him. So he spent a whole year with us, but they did not go with us originally.

*Q: And your husband was the DCM which meant that you were also precipitated further up into the embassy power structure. We've talked about how you got to each one of your other posts. How did one in the early '60s physically get to Addis Ababa?*

VANCE: We flew. I'm sort of vague about this myself.

*Q: Did you go up through London?*

VANCE: No, we flew to Athens, and then we flew Ethiopian Airlines from Athens to Addis Ababa.

*Q: What was Addis like as a city at that point?*

VANCE: It was a large city, and there were many tribal villages in the city of Addis Ababa. It's really a conglomerate of tribal villages. Our house was on the embassy compound which was very beautiful, with lawns and eucalyptus trees, and gardens. But, I say, life in the spacious well ordered embassy compound was in sharp contrast to life just outside the gate. Addis was a conglomerate of tribal villages, each tribe having its own beliefs, language, and skills. Across the street was another stone wall compound with many thatched roof tukels clustered together in a haphazard fashion. This was the Guarage village. Outside the huts the women would be cooking over open fires of eucalyptus branches. There could be heard the banging of wooden looms where cotton thread was being woven into a cheese cloth material for the traditional shama. The streets were crowded with pedestrians, everyone dressed alike in a white shama, and the people were barefoot. And during the rainy season it was very tragic because you'd see the men with little tiny coffins carrying them down, because a lot of children and the old people died because they caught colds, and they had no warm clothing to put on during the rainy season, and, of course, no medicine or anything like that. You'd see the donkeys coming in going to the open market, and they'd be laden with charcoal, and branches of wood for the fires, all the things that were going to be sold at the market — vegetables, and spices, and that type of thing. When we arrived we drove on the left hand side of the road, and when we were there they changed to the right hand side. This was very difficult for everyone. We all had to take the lessons because we were afraid there would be accidents.

*Q: What was it like to be a DCM's wife in this kind of a situation?*

VANCE: I felt more responsibility when I was an Ambassador's wife. When I was the DCM's wife, there was an Ambassador who was married. I did feel responsible but I was just sort of one of the wives. We would get together and commiserate with one another, or if anyone was ill we made arrangements to help.

*Q: Was it a more organized embassy than it had maybe been in Brussels. Was Brussels a very organized embassy?*

VANCE: I didn't think Brussels was very organized. I don't think in Addis it was very organized either. There was no Embassy wives organization. There was again an American Women's Club. And when I was in Ethiopia I encouraged the American Women's Club to become an international women's club. But our talks and the programs were always given in English. I thought this broadened our perspective, and it was more fun to include other people. I did work on the Ethiopian Red Cross Bazaar because the United States had a pavilion and we were expected, of course, to make the most money, and to have the most elaborate pavilion. We ordered clothes, and toys, and dishes, from the United States to be sold in the pavilion, and then the profit would go to the Ethiopian Red Cross. The Emperor was very proud of this activity because he was a strong supporter of the Ethiopian Red Cross. This was a big social event. Every embassy there had a pavilion. And in Addis, for quite a bit of the time, Sheldon was the charg#, so we would be invited to the different embassies for dinner. We would have people to our home for dinner, and we invited a lot of Ethiopians, and we were invited into their homes too. What was always interesting is that the Ethiopians would accept, but we never knew how many were going to come because at the last minute sometimes they wouldn't come, there would be family visitors, or one of the children would be ill. And there were no telephones, so no one would let us know they weren't coming. Or some times, if they had brothers and sisters, or cousins, who arrived to pay a visit at their home just as they were going out the door to our house for dinner, they would just bring them along. So, instead of having formal sit down dinners with protocol, and seating arrangements, it was always buffet. This worked out much better.

*Q: And American cooking?*

VANCE: I had American cooking, and they seemed to enjoy this. Then when we would be invited to their houses, we had wot and injera. And the dining room table was a pedestal

basket that was very colorful and beautifully tightly woven. It was a very, very large basket that sat on a pedestal, and this would be lined with wot, which is a big flat pancake made out of teff flour. Then, on top of it, would be arranged little piles of stew which was the injera, which was very spicy, it would be chicken wot, or beef wot, and you would eat with your right hand. So we would sit around the table, and pull off a little bit of the injera, the pancake, and then dip it in the wot, and then you would eat with your hands. But many times I would be the guest of honor in the Ethiopian homes, so then the host would feed me. That was just terrible because I didn't like the wot injera very much to begin with, and I'd have this great big glob stuffed into my mouth. But there wasn't anything I could do about it. The Ethiopians were very hospitable, and we had a lot of fun. We would go to their homes and they would put on phonograph records, and we would dance western style.

*Q: Were Ethiopian women easy to know?*

VANCE: Yes. They were very reserved. I got to know the granddaughters of Emperor Haile Selassie and Imebet Syble had a degree in social work from a university in England. She was very instrumental in setting up a school for adult women because many of the Ethiopian women had not even had a primary school education. Their husbands were well educated, and they were just left behind. Imebet Syble thought this was a shame, so she established a school for adult women. It was financed by the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association, and I helped her raise money. I got to know her very, very well, and I got together a group of American women, and we taught school. We taught classes at the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association school — the school for adult women. One of the women taught color theory, and how to decorate your home. I taught English, and we had classes in hygiene that the American women taught because some of the classes were taught in English, not all of them. The Ethiopian women were taught to read and write, and basic arithmetic. Well, at the end of the school year the women in the Welfare Association said, as a reward, they were going to give us cooking lessons. And it was really a lot of fun because we started out ... we had these hot peppers that were cut open, and the seeds

taken out, and they were dried in the sun. Then when they were really dry, they were put in a mortar and pestle and we pounded to pulverize the peppers to make pili pili which was a powder which was put in the wot. We learned to identify different spices, there were 16 spices that we had to learn how to identify. And they gave us an examination. We really had an awfully good time. The cooking classes were conducted outdoors, where the Ethiopian women always cook over fires. Those were all very interesting things to do.

*Q: Did you study Amharic?*

VANCE: Yes, I hate to say it, I did. There, there was a course ... there was a teacher hired to teach people in the embassy. So I went to the embassy, and took the beginners course in Amharic. I think there were 16 or 20 lessons, and these were with the officers and the staff who were working. It was very, very difficult because, for instance, the word for tree is zaf. The words were not anything with which I could associate.

*Q: No pattern, no sound, or anything.*

VANCE: No sound, or anything. I did learn to say a few things, and to conduct a simple conversation but I've forgotten most of it. [It] was very, very difficult.

*Q: But you learned enough so that when you were on the street, or traveling, or so on...*

VANCE: I could say something.

*Q: And you didn't feel totally sort of at sea?*

VANCE: No. Well, I still did feel at sea because I learned some, the difference between right and left, and to ask directions, and straight ahead, and how far, how much things cost, that type of thing. But I couldn't carry on a really very elaborate conversation. There are 210 symbols in the Amharic language. There are seven areas of 30 symbols each, and

their symbols, their alphabet, looks very much like the Hebrew alphabet. So I did not learn how to read Amharic. This was just the spoken language.

*Q: It was an oral teaching method?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: You had your responsibilities as the wife of the DCM, and you were obviously very active in the women's communities.*

VANCE: Yes, in the Ethiopian women's community, and also in our American community with the Red Cross bazaar.

*Q: When you raised money for your friend's school, how did you do that?*

VANCE: They had what was called a fancy fair. In the meantime for the Ethiopian Red Cross bazaar, the group of American women had bought a popcorn machine, and had it sent over from the United States. That's one way we raised money for the Red Cross. We borrowed this machine, and the Ethiopian Women's Welfare Association had a fancy fair, and they sold handicrafts, and we went down and sold popcorn, and this was a big success.

*Q: Because popcorn was not something that was...*

VANCE: No, that anyone had ever had before, and they just loved it. So that is one thing we did. And then we helped plan, decide where it was going to be held, and how many booths there were going to be, and who was going to supply the handicrafts. I think we ordered things from the United States for them.

*Q: When you ordered things from the United States, who paid for that? I mean you paid for it, and it was a donation?*

VANCE: No. I think we had a fund, maybe the Korrys financed it, but these were not donations. We would order things, and then we would pay for them, and then sell them for more than we paid for them to begin with, and the profit would go to the Red Cross.

*Q: What was housekeeping like in Ethiopia?*

VANCE: Again, there was an open air market. We used to go down and buy our vegetables.

*Q: You'd go alone?*

VANCE: Yes. I think we ordered canned goods from the United States.

*Q: Did you go, or did the cook go?*

VANCE: I went quite a bit of the time because that's something I like to do. I think it's a lot of fun.

*Q: Was there a wide range of vegetables? Or was it a fairly limited...*

VANCE: Limited, but there was citrus fruit, and there were avocados, and string beans, and we had a vegetable garden — I forgot about that. We grew tomatoes, and string beans, and cauliflower, and that type of thing. I had a gardener.

*Q: All year around. Addis is high, isn't it?*

VANCE: Very high. Our compound was 8,000 feet, which is very high, and there were people who didn't feel good because of that.

*Q: And you?*

VANCE: It never bothered me.

*Q: Was the Peace Corps there?*

VANCE: Yes. It was the largest Peace Corps contingent sent out by the United States to any country. I think at one time there were 600 Peace Corps volunteers, and they were scattered throughout the country in small towns and villages, and they taught English. Some of them worked in hospitals, an enormous Peace Corps contingent.

*Q: Did you know them?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: And did you travel in Ethiopia?*

VANCE: Oh, we did a lot of traveling in Ethiopia. We went by car to Harrar, and to Assab. On Sundays we would go down to Ambo in the Rift Valley. There was a hot spring swimming pool.

*Q: It is the 7th of December 1990 — 49 years from Pearl Harbor. I would like you to start, Jean, by your recollections [of] Pearl Harbor. That's cold, I hadn't said anything to you about that at all. I would like you beyond that to tell me a little bit about your life as a young girl in the Midwest because I think these are interesting touchstones on the person you became.*

VANCE: We were in Hingham, Massachusetts visiting a very dear friend of ours. It was a house party, Sheldon was at Harvard Law School, and we had gone down to spend the weekend. It's a date we will never forget. We were just stunned. We were sitting around the fire talking and having a good time and we heard this on the radio. There was great silence and consternation. We were all very frightened and overwhelmed by the news. I think everyone remembers where he or she was on Pearl Harbor.

And the other date everyone remembers, is where he was when we heard of the death of President Kennedy.

*Q: Where were you?*

VANCE: This was very interesting. We were camping in the Rift Valley in Ethiopia. This time we were around a camp fire, we had gone down with the Smiths. He was the public affairs officer, and their son was with them, and Robert, our son was with us and they were the same age. Our sons wanted to put on the shortwave radio to get the football scores, and we heard the news. It was dark and we could not break camp until dawn. Sheldon knew that he had to get back to the embassy right away so we slept very fitfully. We were in sleeping bags in tents. We had gone down in our Landrover — we had driven it too far off the road and it had sunk into the sand so we had to get workmen to get the Landrover out of the sand in order for us to return. And at the first light of dawn we packed up and went immediately back to the embassy. We were going to spend the whole weekend there.

*Q: And what happened in Addis over that week? What sorts of experiences did you have?*

VANCE: The Ambassador returned to the United States with Haile Selassie for the funeral services, so my husband was in charge. There was a book in the Ambassador's residence — or maybe in the chancellery — that the Ethiopians signed with their condolences and everyone was very upset about it because the Ethiopians, at that time, were very, very good friends of the United States and they admired President Kennedy and President Kennedy started the Peace Corps and sent all the volunteers to Ethiopia. They respected us a great deal. There were just lines of Ethiopians in their white shamas who were there to sign the book, and my husband was there to receive them.

*Q: Did you have to help stand watch on the book?*

VANCE: No, no, I didn't. But we were all very moved by this.

*Q: Let's back up a little bit to being a young woman, a little girl, in Blue Earth.*

VANCE: My father was a doctor, a country doctor, there was no hospital there. Many of his patients were women, he delivered the babies in their homes. Also, the farmers had accidents — they fell onto the machinery and that type of thing. So he was often called out in the middle of the night, and they were always emergencies. He never knew when he was going to be called out, and many times I would go along with him — not in the middle of the night but he would take me along and I would go into the farm houses and sit in the kitchens, and have cookies with the people, and look at the farm animals. That part was always very interesting for me. I attended grade school there, and I graduated from high school. Then I went to Carleton College for four years.

*Q: What did your mother do?*

VANCE: My mother was the doctor's wife, and that was really a very important responsibility because she was his secretary. Whenever my father went on a call, he always let my mother know where he was so in case of an emergency she could get ahold of him. Of course, in those days there was a central telephone operator so she always knew where my father was too because she would listen in to all the conversations. My father was a very loved person in our community.

*Q: But in an interesting way then you had a model for a wife who had a respected working role as a part of her husband's work.*

VANCE: Yes, that's true.

*Q: ...which is something most of us don't have.*

VANCE: I hadn't thought of that, but that is true because Sheldon and I have always worked together. And I really considered the Foreign Service my career also because I made contributions, and we worked together and Sheldon always respected my opinion, and asked my advice. We worked together on many, many things.

*Q: When you were growing up, what sort of spoken or unspoken expectations were there for you as a girl child?*

VANCE: Well, I told my father I wanted to be a doctor, and he said, “No,” that it was impossible for a woman to be a doctor. And I said, “I'm going to be a nurse.” He said, “I don't want you to be a nurse because the work is too hard and you don't have the respect that anyone should have.” He wanted me to do something entirely different.

*Q: But there was an assumption that you would do something. There wasn't an assumption you would simply be a wife.*

VANCE: No, no.

*Q: And they felt then when you married and did something, that you'd done something.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Let's skip back to Ethiopia. You were there, just the two of you, with a son who visited some of the time.*

VANCE: Yes. Well, then Stephen came out two summers to visit us.

*Q: And you were there at an interesting time in African history. Would you expand on that?*

VANCE: The Organization of African Unity, the OAU, was established when we were there. Emperor Haile Selassie had the vision to say that he wanted the headquarters in Addis Ababa, so he had Africa Hall built. It was a beautiful building, and there were stained

glass windows that were made in Italy but they were designed by Afework Tekle, who was a very famous Ethiopian artist, and he was a very good friend of ours.

*Q: Can you spell his name please?*

VANCE: A-f-e-w-o-r-k T-e-k-l-e, Afework Tekle. He was an oil painter but he designed the stamps for the Ethiopian government, and he designed the windows for Africa Hall. The glass was made, I think, in Italy, beautiful. And when the Organization of African Unity was established, and the hall was inaugurated, the African women put on a sumptuous buffet with all the African dishes, and they were in their African costumes. This gave a big lift to all the African countries.

*Q: So it was Pan-African in terms of custom.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: How did you meet Afework Tekle? You say he was a good friend.*

VANCE: Yes, because our son was attending the Ethiopian School of Art in Addis Ababa. Afework Tekle was not a professor there but we got to know a lot of the artists. We would go to his home, and to his studio; he was not married but he was a very hospitable person, and very interesting. I think he wanted to have friends among the international community. He wanted to expand himself and he had traveled in Europe, and spoke beautiful English, and was very talented. And very interestingly, about a year ago he was in the United States and Nancy Matthews had a party for him because their daughter was serving in Ethiopia in the embassy — but now it's under the Mengistu government. Afework Tekle was here traveling, and I think artists don't have political convictions. He was a great friend of the Emperor's, but nothing has happened to him with the Derg government. I don't think he is a supporter of the Derg, but he was allowed to travel in the United States, and he has continued to work as an artist.

*Q: When you say “work as an artist”, what is it, an abstract work?*

VANCE: No. He does beautiful portraits, landscapes, that type of thing. It is not abstract. The windows are abstract — the windows in Africa Hall.

*Q: Did you get to know Haile Selassie?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: What was he like?*

VANCE: He had very twinkly eyes, he loved children, had his little dogs, and every Christmas Eve the American community would go to the palace to sing Christmas carols for him. And we would all be invited in and there would be hot tea, and cookies, and things like that. That part, he was very warm and accessible. One time he had all the Peace Corps volunteers there and the son of the director of the Peace Corps was crawling under the tables and the objects on top of the tables were bouncing up and down and my husband reached down to pull the child and “Oh,” the Emperor said, “don't do that. Let him play. Let him be a child.”

*Q: He was a tiny man.*

VANCE: He was very tiny. Oh, and one time — in the afternoon he would go for a ride in his Rolls Royce, every afternoon at sunset time or in the gloaming, and we were returning from having played golf — we had a little Volkswagen, and Sheldon and I were in the Volkswagen, and the caddies wanted a ride back so we had five caddies in the back seat. Well, whenever you see the Emperor approaching, you have to get out of the car — at least that's what we did — and bow, stand at attention and bow as he passed. Sheldon said, “Here comes the Emperor. Stop the car.” The seven of us took a long time to get out, and we all stood there and bowed. And the Emperor waved, he was very impressed by this sight of seven people getting out of the Volkswagen, and he recognized Sheldon.

*Q: Well, your husband is as tall as Selassie is short, and would be very recognizable. You weren't there when he finally was...*

VANCE: No.

*Q: Did you find the Ethiopians, in your experience of them, a gentle people?*

VANCE: Oh, a very gentle people, and very un-ostentatious. Haile Selassie's wife is no longer living. His daughter and his granddaughter's dressed very simply in shamas. They didn't have fur coats, and they didn't have beautiful jewels, and they didn't live in sumptuous palaces.

*Q: What does the shama look like?*

VANCE: It's a hand woven cotton material, and it's white. It has, generally, a design of colors that is woven into the bottom and down the side. It is a very fine gauzy material, it's like cheese cloth, but much more finely woven.

*Q: You talked about bowing to the Emperor. I didn't know that Americans bowed to people.*

VANCE: It was just respect instead of waving, or shaking hands, or doing anything like that. The Indians have different ways of salutation. We didn't bow deeply, we would stand erect and then bow our heads when he passed. Some of the Ethiopians would prostrate themselves on the ground when he came. If they saw the Emperor coming, they would fall to the ground.

*Q: Did his car have a distinctive horn on it, or something like that so that you knew it was coming?*

VANCE: No. We all recognized it. It was a maroon color, and it was a Rolls Royce. He sat in the middle of the back seat on cushions.

*Q: And the dogs were with him?*

VANCE: And the dogs were with him.

*Q: You also, during that period, worked in a leprosarium?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Can you tell me about that?*

VANCE: While we were in Ethiopia a hospital was established in the leprosarium; there were 2000 beds, and a Scottish orthopedic surgeon — I can't remember his name — came to Ethiopia to run the hospital, and this was the idea of the Emperor because a great deal of advances had been made in the treatment of leprosy, and shots could be given so the disease would be arrested. Many times little children would catch leprosy, and the tendons in their fingers would shorten so they would have hands that looked like claws and they would not be able to be employed. And then, also, they would be ostracized from their families, and their villages, and society. They couldn't get married, and so on, but they were not contagious because they had been taking this medicine. The orthopedic surgeon operated on them so their fingers would become straight, and what we did was ... the children's hands would be put in a hot wax so they would become supple, and then we would do exercises with them. We were assured that we weren't going to catch the disease — actually we didn't touch the children very much. We went out to the hospital and the doctor said it was very important because just our appearance there would take away the fear of the Ethiopians — the fear of this disease. They would say, “Here are all these American women going out and working in the leprosarium, maybe we're wrong, and maybe we don't have to put the lepers in separate colonies. But the old lepers, who had had the disease for many years, would have missing hands and feet, and missing noses. It was really terrible, and they still continue to live in little huts on the property of the hospital.

*Q: How did you get started with that?*

VANCE: We got started because the doctor came to us and asked if we would do it.

*Q: When you say "us" you mean the embassy wives, the American Women's Association*

VANCE: It was the American women who went, it wasn't only the wives of the embassy, but we were all American.

*Q: Did you have an American Women's Association that was sort of the focus of this?*

VANCE: Yes, we did, and while I was there it was changed to an international women's club.

*Q: And you were instrumental in that change.*

VANCE: Instrumental in that I thought it would be very good for us.

*Q: Was it just sort of assumed that you would be a member of that?*

VANCE: I think so, yes. But anyway, I always liked that because I think it's very interesting. We had programs on the history, and the culture; and we organized tours. I think that's very interesting, we want to learn about a country we're living in.

*Q: Were there women in the embassy community, or in the American community, who were beginning to work? We're talking about the mid to late '60s.*

VANCE: No, I don't think so. The spouses did not work but I don't think there were many opportunities for them to work. There were no American businesses, or hotels, where they could be employed. And they weren't employed at the embassy, there were women employees, but they weren't spouses. No, none of us worked.

*Q: And there wasn't a need for you to go in and help out the way you had helped out in Martinique.*

VANCE: No.

*Q: What was the relationship between the spouses, the wives, and the women employees?*

VANCE: I think we had a very good relationship. We lived on the embassy compound and Donnie Donbeck was our nurse and she also lived in a little house very similar to ours. And then there was a program director in the AID program, a woman, who lived on the compound, and we all did things together, and were very fond of one another.

*Q: What about the secretaries?*

VANCE: And the secretaries we had for dinner. I think we had a good relationship with the secretaries.

*Q: One of the things later on, as the forum report came out, and this is anticipating what we're going to talk about later ... one of the real problems was the tension in the Foreign Service between the spouse and the employee.VANCE: I think the employees were concerned about the spouses working in the embassy. The employees thought, "Well, maybe they're going to take away our jobs."*

*Q: But you didn't see any of that sort of tension, particularly earlier?*

VANCE: No, not at all.

*Q: What else sticks in your mind particularly about Ethiopia?*

VANCE: Did I tell about going on picnics — we would take our picnic lunches and the children would appear and watch us eat? We would pick a beautiful spot in the countryside

up on top of a mountain overlooking the Rift Valley, with a beautiful view. And we would put out our blankets, and get out our sandwiches, and lemonade, and so on, and just when we were ready to eat dozens of children would appear. Where they came from we'll never know. They came from behind rocks, behind trees, and from villages that we did not see that were hidden away. And they would surround us and watch everything we did. In the beginning it made me very uncomfortable because I thought they were hungry. So then I would give them our sandwiches to eat. It turned out that they would taste them, but they didn't like them and wouldn't eat them. But I thought that was interesting to see the little villages, and the people on the road, and the donkeys coming to market with the sacks of food they were transporting, and the wood.

*Q: By the time you left Ethiopia did you feel like you had a fair grasp of what makes Ethiopia tick?*

VANCE: Yes, I think so. The people were very isolated. The little villages were not connected by any roads, or railroads, so the people lived a very isolated existence. They would be born in a little village, and die in the same village. While we were there, there was a big change because the University of Addis Ababa was established and it had several American professors who taught at the university. The vice president was an American who was the administrator of the university, and the students at the university came from all over Ethiopia. It was the first time that they had ever been together like that, the different tribal groups, because it was always thought that you should not marry out of your tribal group. But if you're attending a university like that, and you have modern thoughts, things change. You fall in love with someone from a different tribal group, or from another part of the country. So this was a big upheaval, I think, in Ethiopia. But when we were there it was a feudal society and a lot of the land was owned by the church. I think a third of all the land in Ethiopia was owned by the church and, of course, the Emperor owned a lot of land. There was very little private ownership by the people who worked the land.

*Q: Prior to going to Ethiopia, you had been posted in European or European derivative societies. Brazil is a largely European derivative society, at least the Brazil that you were in, and the same would be true of Martinique. What was it like then to go into a society, just as you describe it, that is vastly different in terms of its...*

VANCE: It took a while to get used to it. I'm sure we made mistakes in the beginning.

*Q: When you say it took a while to get used to what sorts of things?*

VANCE: The food, and the way the Ethiopians entertained, and what was expected of us. They were very formal and they were not direct, especially the men. They always said, “yes” whether they meant yes or not. That's something that you have to get used to. They didn't express themselves directly, there were always hidden meanings in what they were saying. And when Ethiopians were talking among themselves, they were aware of these hidden meanings, but I think it was difficult for us. We never really knew.

*Q: Were the Ethiopian women more direct than the men?*

VANCE: I don't think so. I don't think they were very direct either.

*Q: You worked with the Ethiopian women a lot.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: And even though you were transient, and in Brazil working in other languages, you didn't feel this same sense of indirection?*

VANCE: No, no, because the Brazilians are very much like the Americans. They are very direct. They say just what they mean, and there's always a reserve in the Ethiopian woman, or the Ethiopian race. They're very proper, and I think they've been taught not to be frank or to hurt people's feelings. They are very polite. And when a baby is born a mother puts honey in the baby's mouth so the baby will always speak in a honey tone.

To them that's very important. I don't know whether that's true now. I think things are very different but when we were there it was the old fashioned Ethiopia.

*Q: Do you still have Ethiopian friends that you keep in contact with?*

VANCE: Well, I was a very good friend of Imebet Syble, who was a granddaughter of the Emperor and, of course, she and her sisters were put into prison, and they have just now — about a year ago — been released. There were 20 women in a dungeon with a dirt floor, and they had to cook for themselves, and some of them died among the 20 women who were there. But just recently I guess they have all been released, and may have been in the United States. I would like to see them again, but we have not been able to keep in touch with them.

*Q: It would have been dangerous.*

VANCE: It would have been dangerous. Although a friend of ours did go back to Ethiopia. She went in with a lot of clothes, and she thought, “I'm just going to give my clothes to the prisoners.” And she was unable to do that. She thought she would come back with just what she had on, and leave everything there that she could, and she wasn't able to do it.

*Q: Your son clearly brought you some contacts into the art community. You brought contacts because you worked with women. How important to an embassy was this expansion of contacts?*

VANCE: Oh, I think it's very important.

*Q: Could you expand on that a little bit?*

VANCE: The women think differently about social problems, and they worry about things — the Ethiopian women would worry about things that their husbands probably didn't worry about — whether there was going to be enough food, or whether a certain school didn't have enough teachers, that type of thing. Or whether the women themselves were

not educated. The things they worried about were not necessarily the things that their husbands would ever talk about to my husband. So you got a broad view of society that you wouldn't get any other way. And Robert gave guitar lessons to some of the young Ethiopian students and that was fun.

*Q: Which meant that you had students in the house that you wouldn't have had otherwise.*

VANCE: And, of course, they viewed life entirely differently because they were young. We talked to them about what they wanted to do with their lives.

*Q: In talking to those young students, and thinking back now, could you think that you could see what was coming?*

VANCE: No. I don't think so. I thought it would be a democracy, and people would be given more responsibility. The Emperor did have a constitution, and they had a big land reform program. The land was going to be given to the people who worked the land, and we thought these things were going to happen very peacefully. That's what I thought. That the Emperor was trying as much as he could, but he didn't go fast enough.

*Q: So you left Ethiopia, and you came back home again.*

VANCE: Yes. We were here for a year.

*Q: What was that like?*

VANCE: We thought we were going to be assigned immediately so we stayed in an apartment near the State Department, at Letterman House. And then nothing happened, we waited about a year until Sheldon was named ambassador to Chad.

*Q: You didn't leave Ethiopia with an assignment?*

VANCE: No.

*Q: Just that your time was up.*

VANCE: Time was up. We'd been there four and a half years and Sheldon was in the Inspection Corps for the year we were here but he didn't do much traveling because he'd been told that he was going to have an assignment as an ambassador, but we didn't know where. And it took a long time before it happened.

*Q: Now, when you hear that, how do you have to behave, when you begin to hear that your husband is going to be an ambassador? Can you talk about it? Have you got to be quiet about it?*

VANCE: We were very quiet about it. We didn't say anything about it and, of course, it might not happen. You never know. You have to wait because you don't want to say something is going to happen when it may not happen.

*Q: How did you feel when you heard about Chad, for Pete's sake?*

VANCE: We were very excited about it, and it turned out I liked Chad very much.

*Q: You were sent to Ft. Lamy. Ft. Lamy is now in N'Djamena. What was Ft. Lamy like?*

VANCE: It was a town of about 60 or 80,000 people, and the main street was Avenue President Tombalbaye, and there were white-washed stores along the main avenue with arcades. And there were department stores, little shops and that type of thing. And then there was a big African market where the vegetables were sold, and dress material was sold, herbs and that type of thing. And I would go down there and buy groceries, and then there was a dusty museum and it was run by a retired French army colonel. It was an archaeological museum, but there were no concerts and we didn't go to movies — I think there were movies but very infrequently. But we went to the USIS library and once a week we had American movies that were supplied by the United States Government or

by the army. And there we sat outdoors under blankets to keep the mosquitoes away and watched the movie. That was one of our entertainments.

*Q: But you were the ambassador's wife.*

VANCE: Oh, yes.

*Q: Tell me what it's like. I mean, the phone call comes and suddenly you discover that your husband is going to be an ambassador. Start from there.*

VANCE: Well, we were very excited about it because it is a great honor to be named an ambassador. We were very pleased for Sheldon. Well, our life really didn't change. I was just going to another post. It was a small post and I didn't feel that I was really any different from anyone else.

*Q: Was there a training course for you as an ambassador's wife?*

VANCE: No. But it was very interesting when we found that we were going to Chad, Lady Bird Johnson invited the wives of the new ambassadors to the White House for tea. I think she is a very intelligent, warm, interesting person and she had studied about the different countries. She could ask questions about Chad, and she was very well informed. That was fun. We all sat together and I think we were four wives who were going to small African countries, and there were other wives who were going to more important European countries, or South American countries. There was no course, and we weren't given any instruction about what to do. I don't think they felt we had any particular role to play.

*Q: Good, bad, or indifferent. So you then arrived in Chad. How large an embassy was it?*

VANCE: There was the DCM, a political officer, an economic officer, an AID officer, and we had a Peace Corps.

*Q: Consular officer.*

VANCE: Yes, and a consular officer, and an administrator. So I think there were probably eight or ten officers, and the wives were all there, and there was a house. We had a beautiful residence right on the Chari River, with a very pretty swimming pool. And as Chad is very hot there was a ceiling of reed mats over the swimming pool so the water wouldn't get too hot. The swimming pool was open to everyone in the embassy, there were some missionaries, the American community and people came and swam and brought their children and that was fun.

*Q: Was it certain hours? Or were you just sort of continually having open house?*

VANCE: We just sort of continually had open house, I think.

*Q: Did you feel that cut into any sense of privacy you might have?*

VANCE: No, because the swimming pool was a little distance from the house. And it was rather a lonesome life so I was always happy to have people there. I wouldn't be there all the time with them, they would be there by themselves.

*Q: And when you arrived then your husband presented his credentials. Did you go along on that?*

VANCE: No.

*Q: And how were you introduced to the community? Or were you?*

VANCE: There were six ambassadors: the French, the Israelis, the British, and some African countries had ambassadors there. And many times the wives would not accompany their husbands, so I would be the only wife of an ambassador there in residence. And their National Day — in front of the General Assembly building there was a big cement courtyard and that's where the celebration was held, and there would be an orchestra and dancing. And many times I would be seated at President Tombalbaye's

right, and I would open the ball with him. This is all sort of fun. But I was pretty much on my own, so I was very happy to have the companionship of the wives in the embassy.

*Q: Did this mean a larger representational responsibility than you'd ever had before? Or just marginally different?*

VANCE: I don't think it was as great as it was in Ethiopia because there were many more people in Ethiopia. We entertained a much larger embassy and so we were more socially active in Addis Ababa than Ft. Lamy. And the Chadians — the men would come when we had dinners, and we'd have them out on the terrace, or inside, sometimes they would bring their wives but many times they did not bring their wives because their wives didn't speak French, or were reluctant to go out in society, and stayed home with their children. So it wasn't really as active a social life. We did a lot of traveling when we were in Chad to the provincial places. One time we went up into the Tibesti Mountains, up to Bardai, and this was very exciting. We traveled in the Air Attach#'s plane and around Bardai there was a tribal group called the Tubous, and the Tubous were nomadic, and they were always in revolt against the Chadian government.

*Q: Are they the source of the present revolt?*

VANCE: In a way they are because they're Muslim. The people in the southern part of Chad are Christian or Animist. The people in the northern part of Chad, in the desert region in the nomads, are Muslim. But the Tubous had nothing to do with Libya at the time. They just didn't want to be told what to do. They wanted to live their nomadic life, and the Chadian government thought it would be good for the children to be educated, and to have more stability in that region. Well, there was a lull in the fighting so this is when we went up. And the Governor had a dining room built outdoors to receive us. It didn't have a roof over it, but it had mats surrounding it, and we ate outdoors. We had a wonderful mishoui.

*Q: What's a mishoui?*

VANCE: It's lamb that is stuffed with cous-cous, and spices, dates, and raisins. It was just delicious. You eat it with your hands. And then the next day we started out by Landrover, and we went up into the mountains to see the drawings that had been chiseled on the face of the mountains and they were 12,000 years old. There were drawings of hippopotami, cattle, and people that had been chiseled on the side of the mountains. Years ago, instead of a desert, 12,000 years ago, this was a big lake. This was very interesting to me to see the rock drawings. They are very famous. And then we had these Tubou guides along with us who rode on the fenders of the Landrover to protect us with their rifles. And on the way home the Tubous would shoot up into the hills and kill a gazelle, then they would leap off the Landrovers and go in search of their game, and come back. So it took us a long, long time to return home. It was well after dark when we got back and we became very nervous because our guides would disappear and we never knew whether they were going to reappear, or whether we were going to be ambushed. But it was all a lot of fun. That was very exciting. We visited oases, we went to Faya Largeau. We would fly up in the DC-3.

*Q: What's Faya Largeau*

VANCE: That was a big oases, date palm. Again it was in the Tubou area and the people were nomadic but during the date harvest they would return to Faya Largeau to harvest the dates. I think we were there during a date harvest — we planned to be there to see all the people.

And then when we were in Faya Largeau — this was very interesting — we had just circumnavigated the moon and we had movies from USIS, and Sheldon had the movies along and out in the desert the Prefect had alerted the people that these movies were going to be shown and thousands of people came in on camels to see these movies, and there was a full moon in the sky. The Prefect tried to translate what was happening. This was Apollo IX.

*Q: Did people believe that we'd really done this?*

VANCE: I don't know. They seemed mystified. People of the desert are very quiet. They didn't applaud. They didn't talk. They didn't shout, or anything like that. They just listened in silence, looked at the moon, looked at the movies. I don't know whether they believed it or not, or whether they really understood what was happening. Maybe they did. They may have understood better than the people in the United States. They might have had a better understanding of it.

*Q: What was the role of the ambassador's wife then? Were your days busy? How did you do that?*

VANCE: I taught English at the USIS library. I did that two afternoons a week, from 4:30 to 6:30 because the embassy opened very early in the morning and then it closed at 1:30 because of the heat. And from 1:30 to 4:30 everyone stayed home. We had air conditioning but it was really very scorching. I would go out at 4: 30 and the hot air would sear my lungs, but it would have been very difficult to have gone out earlier than that.
I also worked at a women's center because the wife of the former ambassador, Helen Morris, had gotten money from the United States Government to build a kindergarten, and the American women were working in the kindergarten, so this was continuing what she had established. There were a group of Chadian women who had a handicraft project and we would order sewing material, and that type of thing, and we would also help them with the designs, and then we sold what they made so they would have a little income of their own to spend. They were delighted about that, to have something that they had earned themselves, and not be dependent on their husbands for everything.

*Q: What sort of things did they make?*

VANCE: They made place mats, and napkins.

*Q: And where did you sell them?*

VANCE: We sold them among ourselves. We would buy them and send them back to our relatives for Christmas. I would send them to other friends of mine to sell. We also helped, not teaching the children, but we distributed powdered milk. We mixed the powdered milk with boiled water and gave children a lunch every morning. So the embassy wives went down and did that — we took turns doing that. So the day was filled up, to supervise the servants, to go to the market.

*Q: You did your own marketing?*

VANCE: I did most of my own marketing, not all of it but I liked to do that.

*Q: You say "supervise servants" How many did you have?*

VANCE: I think we had three. We had a cook and two houseboys.

*Q: And they were all male?*

VANCE: All male. And then we used to have big buffet dinners. The president came to our house — out in the garden on the terrace — and we had a stage and an orchestra. We had a very famous black singer, a jazz singer, came to Chad. He was on a tour of Africa — Junior Wells from Chicago, he was great. He put on a performance.

*Q: In your garden?*

VANCE: In our garden. We had a stage constructed, and we had all the ministers and their wives and children. It was a big affair — it was a dinner — so we had casseroles, and fish, and meat. And it takes a long time to get all that food together, and to plan the menu.

*Q: When something like this was done how much of the management of it was yours, and how much of it was done out of the office?*

VANCE: I think I did it all, the food.

*Q: And the household produced all the food.*

VANCE: Yes, our kitchen produced all the food. And the houseboys of the other members of the American community would be paid and they would come and help out because, of course, our two boys couldn't do it all. Well, I supervised the construction of the stage, and decided where it was going to be put, and a lot of things like that.

*Q: The administrative officer from the embassy didn't...*

VANCE: He helped, but I think that I managed it. Oh, yes, he was very good.

*Q: But what about the other wives? Were you free to ask them?*

VANCE: Oh, sure, they all helped. They thought it was fun. They were all invited and helped.

*Q: And did they help with the cooking?*

VANCE: No, I think the cooking was all done at our house.

*Q: When you were planning something like that, how easy was the food that you wanted to serve come by?*

VANCE: This was very difficult. We would order food, and when the Air Attach# plane came in we would get supplies of food because the Air Attach# plane would fly maybe to Lagos. We were supplied by the Navy and the Army.

*Q: But you had to pay for it?*

VANCE: Yes, but we were reimbursed for official entertaining. We were reimbursed by the State Department for official entertaining but then we would buy the things and submit a bill. I did all that.

*Q: You also had to keep track of all the expenses for the house because you had to fill out the bills for the house.*

VANCE: Oh, yes.

*Q: Which meant that you were expected to be a manager.*

VANCE: Oh, yes, sure. I was happy to do it but I think it was expected of me.

*Q: If you had said you weren't going to do it ...*

VANCE: But I had a lot of help.

*Q: Tell me a little bit about running a household with help, and servants, and how you chose your servants. Or did you inherit them?*

VANCE: I inherited them. And sometimes they wouldn't work out and then we would hire other people.

*Q: Was running this kind of a household ... I mean, you'd done the same sort of thing in Ethiopia.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: But was it different?*

VANCE: No, I don't think so. The servants did not live on the compound or in our house in any of the places; not in Ethiopia, and not in Chad, and not in Zaire. They lived in their own houses and they would arrive in the morning and depart in the evening.

*Q: What about their families? Were you responsible for them as well?*

VANCE: No, no.

*Q: No sick children, none of the...*

VANCE: Well, the men would ask, if there was a death in the family, and they needed money to buy clean mats for the relatives coming in, they would ask for an advance in salary. They were always borrowing and they had many reasons, or a new child was born and clothes had to be bought. Or children were going to school and they had to have school supplies. They would ask for these things, but it would be part of their salary with advanced salary to them.

*Q: Did you feel like you were out of pocket in all of this?*

VANCE: No.

*Q: Each other place that you have been you've told me ...*

VANCE: You always spend money for entertainment and that type of thing in the United States and we do now. No, I didn't think ... we were able to manage on Sheldon's salary.

*Q: Each of the other posts you've told me how you came and how you got there in a physical sense. To get to Chad what do you do?*

VANCE: We flew into Chad.

*Q: Did you go into Lagos first and then fly into...*

VANCE: I think we went to Lagos and flew in from there.

*Q: And how did you communicate with your family in the United States?*

VANCE: By APO, by letters, but we couldn't telephone. It would be extremely difficult to telephone to the United States. This is some thing that I think is very difficult because we would have to telephone to Paris from Ft. Lamy, and then from Paris to the United States if you got the connection to Paris, which was very difficult, then the connection to the United States wouldn't go through. So we really didn't telephone. But we had shortwave radios where you “over and out,” and sometimes we did that.

*Q: To the United States?*

VANCE: Yes. There were people in the United States who were amateurs we'd use.

*Q: Hams.*

VANCE: Exactly, with a ham radio occasionally.

*Q: Did your family come visit you?*

VANCE: Robert and Stephen came one summer to Chad, but my mother and father were no longer living, and Sheldon's mother did not come to Chad. Sheldon's mother visited us in Ethiopia. My parents were no longer living when we were in Ethiopia — my father died the first day we were there.

*Q: That must have been really tough. You stayed in Chad for two years. That was a good two years?*

VANCE: Yes. I liked Chad, and we had a chance to go up into the Tibesti mountains, and to southern Chad, and we visited the oasis. It was very interesting, and Chad was very different from Ethiopia — being three-quarters desert — just very different. And the

Chadians themselves are very honest, and very simple, and very direct. I liked them very much.

*Q: Did you get to know Chadian women?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Did you work with them?*

VANCE: I worked with Madam Said, who was the wife of the Minister of Justice. She was the director of the kindergarten that the American women were helping with. She was in charge of the handicraft project, and one time I went to visit her at her home because she had been absent from school, and I was worried there was something ... we were putting in a new order. And when I arrived she was lying in the hallway of her home on a reed mat, and she was in labor. I said, “Oh, Madam Said,” — it was her ninth child being born. I said, “I will go ... “, and she said, “No, just sit down and hold my hand and talk to me because that will take my mind off the labor pains,” which I did.

*Q: You knew she was expecting a child?*

VANCE: I knew she was expecting a child, but I didn't know that it was as imminent as it was. So I got to know her very well.

*Q: Did you sit there and talk until the baby was born?*

VANCE: No, no. I sat there for a while, and then I excused myself. I really was afraid that the baby was going to be born while I was there and I'd be responsible, and I wasn't sure I knew what to do. Her husband was Brahim Said, and we always called her Madam Said. They lived in a big compound and the walls of the houses were made of clay and they were very thick. They called it pete pete. And the relatives all lived together, they had adjacent houses, and in the middle would be a big courtyard and that's where the cooking was done over open fires. And Madam Said, because her husband was the most

important member of his family and had a job, was really responsible for this enormous extended family. She had to be sure that they all had enough to eat. She had to help them get jobs, she had to help them when they were ill. Because he was a Minister, and salaried, he was the wealthiest of the family, but he himself had responsibility for cousins, and aunts, and uncles, and people from his tribal village came into the city and Madam Said and her husband would be responsible for getting them started. That's the way the Africans work, and to me, I think that's unusual but it's very interesting to see how other people live, and how they manage.

*Q: When you left Chad, you knew you were going to Zaire?*

VANCE: Yes. We came home very briefly, and went directly to Zaire because the ambassador in Mexico City died and the ambassador in Zaire replaced the ambassador in Mexico City, so Sheldon had to go directly to Zaire. But this was just perfect because he had been working on Congolese affairs before the independence of Zaire for many, many years. And he also worked on Zaire affairs in the Department of State in the early years of independence. So he was very knowledgeable about Zaire, and knew many of the personalities, and the people in the government in Zaire. And he had traveled to Zaire when he had been in Belgium. And, of course, the Zaire was a colony — it was Belgian Congo before. So he understood the attitude of the Belgians towards their former colony that had become independent. So he was really just a great choice to become ambassador there.

*Q: How did you feel?*

VANCE: I was excited too. I've always been very pleased to ... when there's something new to do.

*Q: So you came home, and you went down there. What was Zaire like?*

VANCE: It was a city, Kinshasa, of about two million people, and it had increased tremendously like a lot of the African cities in the last ten years because a lot of the people left their little villages and went to the city. And a city that expands so rapidly has many problems naturally, and the people weren't adjusted to living in a big city like that. When we arrived there was no good hotel. The Intercontinental Hotel was built while we were there, so when visiting dignitaries from the United States came to Zaire, they always stayed at our residence, and that was very interesting, but that's a responsibility also because there was only one hotel and it wasn't a very good hotel, and the rooms were always rented well in advance so there would be really no other place for them to stay. There were many embassies, almost all of the European countries had embassies in Zaire so that was very interesting. And then the embassy itself was enormous.

*Q: Were people calling on you, and did you call?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: ... to drop cards and all of that. Had you done that in Chad*

VANCE: No, in Chad I didn't do it.

*Q: And you hadn't done it in Ethiopia?*

VANCE: In Ethiopia the wives called on me, and I called on them. In Chad we were so small it really wasn't necessary, we all knew one another from the very beginning. We would go to each other's houses, it wasn't as though I was by myself. In Zaire I called on all the wives of all the Zairian ministers too. That was very interesting to get to know them.

*Q: Now when you went did you just drop in on them in the way you would ...*

VANCE: No, no, the embassy called in advance to ask if I could come, and they were always very nice, and they were always all ready to receive me. I don't think you could just appear out of nowhere to call.

*Q: It wasn't a matter of just dropping a card.*

VANCE: No, no. I was received, and we always had tea and little codfish cakes or something.

*Q: Codfish?*

VANCE: Yes. They made little codfish croquettes which were served with the tea.

*Q: Were the Zairians different as people from the Chadians?*

VANCE: Oh, very different. The women have a great sense of humor, and they're very noisy. They laugh a lot and are very exuberant, and really like a good time. And the Chadian women were more reserved like the Ethiopian women.

*Q: Can you give me some sense of what your day and life was like as the wife of the ambassador in Zaire.*

VANCE: There was a tremendous amount going on. We went out almost every night, or we had people in. And, of course, our children were not there so they didn't suffer from a lack of parental care. There was a golf course so I played golf. I never played bridge at any of these places; I like to play bridge but I think that's a waste of time. I would go down to the market. There was a wonderful museum of African art. And when we had visitors, I would take them sightseeing. We'd go to the botanical gardens, and we would go to the museum of African art, and we would go down to the open markets, drive around. And then we did a lot of traveling in Zaire. We would fly, it was a C119 I think the Military Mission's plane was called. And again the Army Attach# had the plane. We would fly

to Lubumbashi. The distances in Zaire are enormous. Zaire is a country that is as large as the United States east of the Mississippi. So you couldn't get in a car and drive to Lubumbashi, there was nothing like a railroad then, it would take you two or three days to get there. That was the capital of the Katanga. And we flew to Kisangani up in the equatorial rain forest, and we went to Bukavu, we went into the Kivu, different places, in Chad we traveled by Landrover and in Ethiopia we went by car or Landrover, but in Zaire we flew, and we visited a lot of the mission stations. Up near Kisangani we flew to a place called Nyankundi. It was a big Protestant mission hospital, and they also had a school. We stayed there, I think, two nights and that is where, near there, we walked into the equatorial rain forest, to a pygmy village, because there was a project at that mission to educate the children of the pygmies. They are nomadic, and they'll be in a camp for maybe six weeks, and at the end of that time they will pick up their houses that are made of leaves on poles, and move to another location. So you never really know where they are located. We went in with a missionary and two of her pygmy students. It was beautiful in the equatorial rain forest, but it would have been very difficult to have gone in by ourselves because we would have been lost. We did find a pygmy village. They're very primitive. They had very few clothes, the women I don't think had any clothes at all. And the clothes they did have were made of bark cloth. And they were all huddled together, and they sang and they put on a play for us of an elephant hunt and that was very interesting. And we took photographs, and the pygmy chief and Sheldon had their photo taken together. The pygmy chief came up just to his waist, and I thought the photo was very funny. We sent the photograph in to the Foreign Service Journal, “Pygmy Chief and Ambassador Vance on the left.” When it was printed in the Foreign Service Journal they left “on the left” out. I think they thought it was insulting to Sheldon as though you couldn't tell the difference between the two.

*Q: You'd been involved in good works everyplace. What did you do in Zaire?*

VANCE: In Zaire, of course, we did too. The university was called Louvanium, it had just recently been established too, and there were students from all over Zaire. And, again,

in Zaire there are over 50 tribal groups, and four principal languages, but everyone had a tribal language and then another language, and then French. The men students would come, there were very few women students, I think two women students. They would bring their wives from the villages with them, and these women had no education, even primary school education. So we established a center for them so they could be taught reading and writing, and a little elementary knowledge. And I arranged for different grants given by the United States Government to help the Zairian government.

We were able to purchase sewing machines, and this was the big drawing card because I don't think the women really cared whether they learned how to read or write, but they just loved the sewing machines, so they had sewing lessons. And there was a women's center at the university for the wives. I think that was a big contribution.

*Q: Students' wives?*

VANCE: For the students' wives.

*Q: Now when you say “we”, was this the American embassy group?*

VANCE: This was the American embassy group. We had an American Women's Club there also. To begin with it was an embassy club, and then we included the people in the British embassy. We had very interesting programs. I was the honorary president, but we had an elected president, but I attended quite a few of the board meetings when they asked me to. And I helped plan the programs because I was able to get hold of people to talk. We had a talk on the African talking drums, and on the history of Zaire, and different things like that. Oh, and on the explorers because Stanley explored in the Zaire — we had a program on that. We had a very good time, but the meetings were always held at the embassy residence because we had a big living room, and a big terrace, and a loud speaker system. It was just easier, I had a staff of servants so we could serve tea. So all the meetings were held at our house.

*Q: And this was something you had inherited as well.*

VANCE: I had inherited it, and I worked very enthusiastically with the women's group. And then we had a fund raiser for the women's center. We had a ball, and, of course, we sold tickets, and we had a raffle. I had invited some of the Zairian ministers and their wives to sit at our table, and they bought raffle tickets, and the wife of the Minister of Interior won a blonde wig that had been contributed by one of the beauty salons. We were all horrified by this present. I said, “Oh, goodness, I will take it down tomorrow and exchange it for you.” And she said, “Oh, no. I'm going to put this on the table in my living room, and it's going to be a good conversation piece.”

*Q: She was a woman with a sense of humor.*

VANCE: I think so. They thought it was as funny ... well, I didn't think it was funny. I thought they were going to have their feelings hurt but not at all. They thought this was just marvelous to get a blonde wig. Maybe she wore it.

*Q: Was the working language French?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: What was it, in effect, to be the leader of this large group of American women even though it was the honorary leader?*

VANCE: I didn't feel put upon. I sort of like things like that. I didn't feel that I was queen, or anything like that. I did it because I wanted to.

*Q: But the upshot of it between running the house, and being involved in the various things that came from your husband's job, and the things that came through the women was that you were very, very busy.*

VANCE: I was very, very busy.

*Q: And would you say that again you expanded the horizons of the embassy because of the kinds of contacts that ...*

VANCE: I think so, oh, yes, I really think so.

*Q: One of the things I remember hearing about Zaire was that it was dangerous. That there was a lot of housebreaking, and ...*

VANCE: Not when we were there. But now it is very difficult to live there because there are a lot of houses broken into. I think we had maybe one or two incidents, not many. And our administrative officer and his wife went down to the movies one night and someone jumped out and took her purse. This was talked about for months afterwards. But that was very unusual.

*Q: And you felt free to come and go, and move around the city easily.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Did you drive yourself, or did you have a driver?*

VANCE: Both. I had our Volkswagen. We got it when we went to Ethiopia. We had it in Ethiopia for four and a half years, and in Chad, and then the little Volkswagen went to Zaire. So I was independent and I could scoot around in that little Volkswagen, and when I went out to play golf, or when I went to visit my friends, I went in the Volkswagen. But if I were going to the market, or if I were accompanying a visitor on a tour, I had a car and a driver, but I didn't use them all the time.

*Q: How large a household staff were you managing?*

VANCE: Seven, because the Belgian work rules were in place and they could work only eight hours a day, and we had two shifts. We had people there 16 hours a day because they would have to be there for early breakfast in the morning, and then if we had a dinner at night they would have to be there — it might be 1:00 a.m. before they were through. So we had two shifts.

*Q: All men?*

VANCE: All men.

*Q: How did you like having men working in your house?*

VANCE: I got used to it. I think it's different, if you have young children, it's nice to have a woman. In Zaire I did have a housekeeper too to help, but she and I did things together. I did the accounts, and we had locked cupboards, and we had an enormous amount of canned food and provisions, we had deep freezers, because we entertained large groups of people and we had to have our supplies there because there were things we were unable to buy in Zaire.

*Q: So in effect you were managing a small hotel.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: The housekeeper was a Zairian*

VANCE: No, she was Greek

*Q: Had you inherited her?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: Was it a healthy place to live?*

VANCE: I think so.

*Q: You took malarial suppressive?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: What about other sort of African diseases that people always worry about?*

VANCE: We were very careful. We boiled our water and filtered it — we boiled it first and then filtered it to get the air back into it. I have always been very careful to see that the water is boiled the proper amount of time; I think it should be at a rolling boil for 30 minutes because the servants many times would ... when it came to a boil, they would think that was enough. Or maybe they wouldn't boil it at all, just put it in the filter. I think you have to supervise things like that. My husband did get amoeba, but I was lucky, I didn't. And then when you're entertained, of course, there's no way of having safe food.

*Q: Did the Zairians entertain a lot?*

VANCE: Not a lot, not as much as the Ethiopians did. We were invited into their homes, but not frequently. But there were big receptions given by President Mobutu and Mrs. Mobutu.

*Q: What was Mobutu like?*

VANCE: He was very nice, very friendly. He had a big family and he lived on Mt. Ngaliema which was overlooking the Congo River so we would always go to Ngaliema for receptions. They had very, very nice parties. Adoula was the Prime Minister when we were there, and we were entertained at their home which was quite near ours, and a home very similar to ours. Our home was not pretentious at all, very comfortable and very attractive, right on the Congo River. We could hear the rapids when we were going to sleep.

*Q: Open? Or did you use air conditioning?*

VANCE: It would be open part of the time. Kinshasa did not have terribly hot heat, it was a humid heat, and it would be during a certain season, maybe four or five months of the year, and then it would be cool and we'd have the windows open. We didn't use the air conditioning the year around. In Chad we had to.

*Q: Did you stay for the full five years?*

VANCE: We had two home leaves, and then we came back with President and Mrs. Mobutu when they were on a state visit.

*Q: Tell us about that.*

VANCE: First, we had two state visits. We had a state visit with President Tombalbaye and he did not travel with his wife. It was when President Johnson was president, and President and Mrs. Johnson were having a big dinner at the White House, and they wanted a woman to accompany President Tombalbaye. They thought his wife was going to be with him, and she wasn't there. So the Massibis had just arrived, and he was the new Chadian Ambassador to the United States, and she was 18 years old, and just a very darling person and spoke beautiful French, but she was very uneasy about doing this. She wasn't going to go to the White House to the dinner at all. I sat down with Mrs. Massibi and persuaded her that it was very important that she go. She went and she did not have her proper dress because it didn't arrive in time. She had a beautiful ball gown ordered from New York, it was to be flown down, and it didn't come. She went in a very simple African dress, and she sat at the right of the President. She was the hit of the evening. So I thought that was very interesting.

Shelly and I were staying with friends and we picked up Tombalbaye at Blair House and then drove with him in his limousine to the White House for dinner. Then when we came with the Mobutus, Mrs. Mobutu did come along and the president of the National

Assembly, Mr. Boboliko and his wife, and the president of the Chamber of Commerce and his wife, Mrs. Tumba. So there were the four women in the official party. I was one of them, then the three Zairian women. We had a wonderful time. We went to Ft. Bragg, and to the Rockefeller estate, we flew in helicopters.

*Q: Who was president at that time?*

VANCE: President Nixon.

*Q: And Rockefeller was the Vice President.*

VANCE: It wasn't to the Rockefeller's home, it was his brother's. We went to San Francisco. Oh, and there Shirley Temple Black had a very important position in the Republican party and she gave a dinner for Mrs. Mobutu because the bankers and the business people were entertaining President Mobutu, and, of course, Sheldon was with him. So Mrs. Mobutu had to be entertained, so Shirley Temple Black gave a very lovely dinner to which we all went. I had to do quite a bit of the translating, there was an official translator along but still Shirley Temple Black had friends of hers, so there was a lot of translating for Mrs. Mobutu. Then we went down to Muir Woods, and we went to Disneyland.

*Q: That must have been something.*

VANCE: ... and they just loved it. But this is all very complicated because at Disneyland we had a special guide, but we had a little tour bus of our own because there were so many of us in the official party. We did everything, and then President Mobutu wanted my husband to translate the song of the Tiki tiki bird, and things like that are just impossible to do. They were very good traveling companions, and enjoyed it all. Then we went to a cattle ranch in Texas.

*Q: So you're talking about two weeks.*

VANCE: No, it was five days of travel and three days in Washington.

*Q: Goodness gracious!*

VANCE: I know. We just ran from one place to another. Of course, we had the Air Force Two plane that we traveled on. That was fun too. So I was connected with two official visits and two tours of the United States. Tombalbaye also traveled around, and I went along too.

*Q: Which gave you a chance to see your own country in a way that you hadn't otherwise.*

VANCE: I had been to Disneyland, and I'd been to San Francisco, but I'd never been on a Texas cattle ranch before, and I'd never been to the Rockefeller estate either. So all this was fun.

*Q: You were in and out of Africa from 1962 to 1974. It was an enormous period of change in Africa, and you were in three very different countries. What sorts of observations do you have to make about that?*

VANCE: I think Africa is changing, like all the countries of the world. So many of the African countries had just gained their independence. Chad was part of French Equatorial Africa, and then Zaire was the Belgian Congo. Ethiopia had always been independent, but of course, it is very different now. The people were moving from the villages to the cities, and hospitals were being improved. Airports were being built, and hotels, businesses were being established. The African countries were going to the modern world. And poor President Tombalbaye; Chad is very, very poor, and he kept saying to my husband, “I can't believe that God would have created Chad, and not given us anything. I think we must have oil, or iron, or something.” And it turns out they do have some oil. There are ways of finding out where oil deposits are located, like airplanes flying over and using certain instruments, and they have discovered that Chad does have some oil.

*Q: Was Zaire in the five years ... you said that Kinshasa was not unsafe, was Zaire as a country a relatively peaceful place at that point?*

VANCE: Yes, I think it was, but, before, it wasn't, when they had the hostage taking in Kisangani. They had terrible things happening. But we were very lucky to have been in Ethiopia, Chad, and Zaire when we were because there were revolutions afterwards in Chad, and the American ambassador and his wife had to go in a rowboat across the Chari River to escape into the Cameroons. Terrible things happened. And before we were in Zaire there were revolts, and wars, and killings. It was not safe, but when we were there it was safe. We were lucky.

*Q: Did you worry about it at the time?*

VANCE: No.

*Q: Was one of the roles that you played sort of keeping other people from worrying?*

VANCE: I think so because I think that if the ambassador and his wife are worriers, I think that reflects, and other people start doing the same thing. I think you have to set an example, but I didn't worry, and I was trying to set an example. But I think this could happen if you were unsure, or if you were unhappy in the country, I think that affects people.

*Q: I remember the very first time that I rode with my husband behind the flags, and the rather special feeling that it was to do that. Was this something that you felt?*

VANCE: Oh, yes. I think that is ... you're representing the government and the people. No, I think that is very impressive. But one time up at one of the receptions at Mt. Ngaliema — the Liberian Flag looks very much like our flag, and they had a car that looked just like ours and I got into the official Liberian Embassy car instead of our own car.

*Q: This is the 4th of February 1991. Let's reset the scene. You're in Kinshasa, you're the ambassador's wife.*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: And you'd been there a while.*

VANCE: We'd been there two years. We were in Zaire five years over five years all together. So after two years I knew all the wives, and we did a lot of things together.

*Q: And you had your role.*

VANCE: Yes

*Q: And you understood how it worked, and you were comfortable in it?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: And you felt that it was a reasonably defined role?*

VANCE: No, I didn't think that. There were things I thought of doing myself, and I always took a great interest in the health, or the happiness of the family members of the embassy staff. And, as I said, I think, before, we had an International Women's Club but it always met at our house because it was the biggest house, and we had a big terrace and the chairs would be set up on the terrace. I think we met every month, and we had a program, and the embassy wives weren't required to come but a lot of them did come. And we had very interesting programs on the African talking drums, and the history of the explorers of the Zaire, that type of thing. We had Zairian professors speak to us, and people who were visiting would come and speak to us also.

*Q: And then it was March of 1972, and bingo, your husband brought home...*

VANCE: A directive. So I called all the embassy wives together...

*Q: Before you called them together, what did you think of it when you saw it?*

VANCE: I was really delighted because I thought that we should never have been on our husband's efficiency report to begin with. But I had already gone beyond this. I think I was the type of ambassador's wife who didn't expect the wives to come and help. If they wanted to, that's fine. But if they wanted to do other things, I thought that was fine too. So that really didn't disturb me. I don't think people should be required to do something the ambassador's wife wanted them to do.

*Q: So you called the wives together.*

VANCE: And we read the directive. And then we talked about, it. There were a lot of us and it was a very hot day, so we sat inside in the living room, and people sat on the floor and in chairs. The discussion was very spontaneous.

*Q: At this distance ... I mean it's 20 years ago, will be, do you remember the gist of the discussion?*

VANCE: I think they were all delighted, also to have their independence because most of them were young wives, and a lot of them were coming to Kinshasa — some of them on their first post. And they had been living in the United States, and they had careers, and they had been part of a women's liberation movement which I had missed more or less because all these years when there was ferment in the United States, we were living in Africa. And you come back home, but you aren't aware really of the societal changes. I think it's very difficult to come home on home leave, and to catch up on everything that has happened while you've been gone.

*Q: Do you remember among your younger women, did you have some angry ones?*

VANCE: No. I don't think so.

*Q: I mean, one hears stories of that.*

VANCE: ... of that, or they were very polite. They were very happy to be liberated, but I don't think any of them were angry. I don't think they felt that they had been abused in other posts, or in Zaire.

*Q: Were there, among your younger women, were there people who had found jobs for themselves? Had that started yet*

VANCE: No. It was very difficult to get jobs in Kinshasa. I think some of them maybe worked at the commissary. Most of them were not employed. I don't think they were teaching at the American school either, it was the TASOK, The American School of Kinshasa. It was a missionary school and I think the teachers had been hired in the United States, and I don't think there were any wives who taught there.

*Q: As you looked at it, and as you talked to other ambassador's wives at the regional meetings for ambassadors, did you see that this made any direct change in the way things were done, at least in the short run?*

VANCE: No, I didn't think so. I think that people were still very cooperative. The wives would come to parties, but I had a staff of servants so they weren't required to bring things. But for the Fourth of July reception, which was really enormous, then everyone contributed, and I don't think they thought anything much about it. I don't think they thought it was an arduous duty.

*Q: You say this with such a sweet smile. I'm sure that's part of what helped to keep it from being an arduous duty. Don't you think how what you need to do is presented to you makes a big difference in the way people feel?*

VANCE: Oh, I think so. I think maybe someone could be very demanding, and that would make a difference.

*Q: So you stayed then in Kinshasa for three more years after that, and then you came back here.*

VANCE: We came back in 1974 and I became second vice president of AAFSW in 1976. My husband retired in 1977.

*Q: Had you ever been actively involved in AAFSW before?*

VANCE: Yes, I had been. I was a charter member, and I was very active when I was in Washington. And then I continued my membership when we were overseas so that I could keep up with what was happening.

*Q: When you came back onto the board...*

VANCE: I'd never been on the board before, but when I was asked to do something, I did it.

*Q: As you've watched AAFSW over that period, had you seen shifts in its emphasis in what it did, and how it did it?*

VANCE: I don't think there was a shift until maybe 1976 when we started the Forum Committee. Because up until that time there were very interesting programs, and everyone liked to go and see their friends.

*Q: And it was a luncheon.*

VANCE: It would be a luncheon, or a coffee on the eighth floor [of the State Department], but I think AAFSW was very traditional. And I think this was an upheaval when the Forum

Committee was formed. The board was very reluctant to finance what we wanted them to finance.

*Q: Why did people decide that a forum needed to be formed?*

VANCE: Well, that is what I don't know. I think that some of the young women who were members of AAFSW talked to Lesley...

*Q: Lesley Dorman.*

VANCE: Lesley Dorman, who was president of AAFSW at that time. Anyway, AAFSW tried to encourage the young women to join, and I think that they themselves expressed the opinions that they thought more should be done for the well being of the Foreign Service, and for the families. So the committee was formed and I was the first chairman. And then I chose a committee among the young women; they were mostly young women who were very desirous of having changes made. And I listened to them very carefully, and then we went on from there.

*Q: How many committees did you have?*

VANCE: We had five committees. I've got my blue notebook here.

*Q: Could we borrow that to make a copy?*

VANCE: Surely. There was Family Life, The Modern Foreign Service Wife, Orientation, Re- Entry, and then The Woman in Transition. The Woman in Transition was ... her husband was going to retire, or she was in the process of divorce, or she had recently become a widow — I think that was a very important committee. That Women in Transition study group report, and the Re-Entry study group report ... oh, the other one was The Spouse Skills Talent Bank, so that makes six.

*Q: Do I remember that ... because we came home at about that time, that in May or June of '76 there was a large meeting at the Guy Mason Center?*

VANCE: Yes, that was the very beginning of the Forum.

*Q: Would you tell me about that.*

VANCE: Mavis Barrett and I organized it. I think it was on a Saturday or a Sunday, and we sent out notices to the members of AAFSW but you did not have to be a member of AAFSW to attend. I can't remember how we notified the other Foreign Service wives in Washington, but there was a tremendous attendance. And people there were very bitter, and they stood up and spilled the beans about the injustices that had occurred during their husbands' careers, and the meeting went on much longer than we anticipated. It was one woman after another who popped up to give her ideas. And there were women who had been very happy in the Foreign Service, and had nothing to complain about and they also spoke. But it was mostly the people who felt that there were a lot of wrongs that should be redressed, and especially that the women should have had better language training before they went overseas with their husbands, and that they should have known more about the Foreign Service, and that the information given to the husbands wasn't given to the wives so that they didn't know about travel allowances, and the medical facilities available to them. I think this is very important when the woman is responsible for her family's health, and the children's education — the husband is too, but most of the responsibility falls on the wife. And coming back to the United States was very difficult, and they felt there should be a child center at FSI so that the women who had young children, and could not afford to have babysitters, would be able to attend the courses, and it should not be on a space available basis, but that we should have the right to attend, take the hard language courses, and the area studies courses that were available only to the employees and not to the family members. And that there should be more travel allowances for the children who were in school in the United States to come out.

When we went into the Foreign Service, for instance, when we went to Ethiopia our children could come out once in two years. And then Sheldon arranged so that we could be returning, so that we would be here in the United States the year when they couldn't come to visit us. But it would have been really wonderful if they could have had two trips a year, which is what they have now. And better education allowances, and better information about the schools.

And then people thought there should be family counseling services at the different embassies. Also, that the language education should continue in the different embassies, not just here in Washington.

*Q: What about representation? Was that a big issue?*

VANCE: Yes, it was. I think that was taken care of in family life because sometimes the women felt they had to spend too much time on representation, and they went to too many parties, and they neglected their families, and that they should have been home with their young children when it was required that they attend to social functions. Then the women who wanted careers, and many of them do have careers now because it's easier for the women to get work permits in the different countries because we have bilateral arrangements with many different countries now which didn't exist before, so the women can work. And they felt that would be more profitable if they were doing something like that instead of entertaining because they would be meeting the nationals of the country where they were, in the business world, or in the academic world, instead of just meeting them socially, and that it would be more meaningful. And I agree with that. So there were the two things that the women thought should be changed.

*Q: After this meeting, how did you gather the information that went into making up the forum report? Because I remember you had an enormous amount of it.*

VANCE: Yes. We sent out nine or ten thousand questionnaires. The State Department sent them out for us asking about people's ideas about the Foreign Service. They were sent to posts all over the world, and many of the women responded, not all of the women did respond. But I think that many times the questionnaires ... the questionnaires were sent to the administrative officers, and the administrative officers would give the questionnaires to the husbands, but maybe they gave them to the secretaries, and the secretaries didn't give them to the husbands to take home. Or they got lost. I think many of the women did not receive the questionnaires because they weren't sent directly to the women.

This is one thing we wanted to do, but we didn't have the money for the postage.

*Q: How would you have gotten their names?*

VANCE: That was another thing. It was very difficult because we wouldn't have known their names, or whether the men were married. That was another thing. That was a big hang-up. I think we sent them to the husbands and said that if they had wives, to take them home to the wives.

*Q: Did you organize committees to address these things? How did you do that?*

VANCE: Yes. We got a list from the State Department of the officers and I don't know how we were able to do this but we did. We met at Shirley Fearey's. She has a great big house, and a big recreation room, and we had a committee and we addressed the questionnaires. But, of course, the forum committee itself formulated the questionnaires that were sent out, but it did take two or three mornings to ... I think they were personally addressed to the officers to take home to their wives. Then we talked to people on the telephone in the Washington area, and it seems to me we had another meeting besides that first meeting at the Guy Mason Center. I think we had two or three meetings. I don't know whether we had

a tape recorder, but we had a secretary who took notes in shorthand so we knew exactly what was said at these meetings.

*Q: Then didn't you have some committee meetings that met all year?*

VANCE: Oh, yes. Yes we did. And then, we had what we called the Steering Committee, the chairmen of these different groups met and sometimes they would bring members of their committees with them, and we always met at our house here where we are now. For a while we were meeting two or three times a week, not everyone would come every time, but this [is] the way we drafted the Forum Report.

*Q: How many responses did you get? Do you remember? Several thousand as I remember.*

VANCE: Oh, yes, I think so. I can't remember.

*Q: My recollection is that you must have gotten close to 50 percent response.*

VANCE: I don't think so. I don't think it was that great.

*Q: But whatever you got, it was high and higher than anybody expected.*

VANCE: It was higher than we expected, and I can't remember the percentage, but I don't think it was 50 percent.

*Q: And it took a year all together?*

VANCE: No, the Forum Committee was formed in August of 1976, and we presented our report in March of 1977. So it took us six months, and I think that was better because we were working under pressure and enthusiasm.

*Q: Was it a self set deadline?*

VANCE: No.

*Q: What was the reason for the deadline?*

VANCE: I don't know. We just finished our report. We worked very hard to finish it.

*Q: What were the major recommendations? You've got the Forum Report there in your hand, I believe.*

VANCE: First we stated the problems, and we formed our committees, and the recommendations were first: to establish a new relationship between the Department of State and the spouses of Foreign Service employees based on recognition of mutual responsibilities. The second recommendation was, create a family liaison office. And the third was, improve the training provided spouses to insure that it meets their needs in training languages and other cross-cultural skills, etc. And four, to review and clarify representational responsibilities, and explore ways to compensate spouses for their work and expenses. And that still hasn't been done. That's very difficult to cope with. And five, the 30 day temporary housing allowance for families returning to Washington should be extended. And six, review the quality of medical care provided for Foreign Service families, particularly at posts abroad, and take prompt action to improve medical care worldwide. Counseling for mental health problems should be expanded. This was something new, and it was new to me, using paraprofessional counselors abroad. This was something we ran into a great deal of difficulty with, that particular recommendation. And seven, recognize the diverse skills and talents of spouses, and work to integrate these into the post community abroad. Maintain a catalogue of the spouses' skills talents in a bank. And I think that is very, very good. And that took a long time to implement because it was very expensive, and then we had to get the information from the posts about what jobs were available, and we had to encourage the women to go and register with the spouses' skills talent bank. But now it's operating very well. Then the eighth is, to review family educational requirements, and work to minimize the adverse effects of Foreign Service

life on educational continuity, and to improve schools, and also to have more information about the boarding schools available in the United States, and how to apply for admission to universities and what the requirements are, etc. Have an educational counselor in FLO, the Family Liaison Office. And the ninth recommendation, provide financial support for ad hoc community efforts to improve teenage morale abroad.

I remember when Stephen and Robert were in Ethiopia; Stephen, during the summer he was there, did over the telephone book the directory of essential telephone numbers, and the telephone numbers of the people in the embassy. But he wasn't paid for the work because Sheldon was the DCM and thought it improper to pay his son. Stephen did a wonderful job, and he got a recommendation, but it would have been a lot of fun if he'd had maybe $50.00 to spend for something he wanted.

Then the tenth is, improve evacuation procedures by sending a specially trained TDY officer to advise at posts. And the eleventh recommendation is to meet with forum participants to promote mutual understanding, and cooperation, regarding the above recommendations.

We presented this to the Secretary of State — with Secretary Cyrus Vance, at the time.

*Q: Is he any relation?*

VANCE: No, but the funny thing is, his sister is Jean Vance so he always, I think, had a fondness for me because I had the same name as his sister.

*Q: Let's back up to one thing you said. You said there were problems with the recommendation for paramedical counseling. What sorts of problems with that recommendation?*

VANCE: I think in the financing of it, because it would have to be done by the medical bureau, and maybe they thought it wasn't necessary. But I think it really is very necessary.

And how would they write the ... well, the rules, it would have to be confidential. I know it was done, but it was very difficult to set up anything like that.

*Q: It seems to me that I remember hearing people say at the time that, not only was the report itself important, but it was important that it was done with the process that it used. That there was this effort to get everybody involved.*

VANCE: I think that's very important. And then, also, we had interviews several times with the Director General of the Foreign Service, and with the Under Secretary for Management, and with the Secretary of State, and with the Directors of AID and USIS, to explain to them what we were trying to do, and to respond to any questions they had. They would read the report, and read over our recommendations, and then they would say frankly, “We hope we'll be able to do this for you, and we think this is very important. We would like to do something else but we don't have the funds and, also, there is legislation that prevents us from doing it.” This is the Foreign Service Act, which sets forth the things the State Department can do, and the things it can't do. Changes would have to be made. And they said some were just impossible to make. It is very difficult to get funding for different programs — new programs.

*Q: But then the Forum group itself, plus some of the other officers of AAFSW, were the group that politicked and met to first convince the management of the State Department that a Family Liaison Office was necessary?*

VANCE: Exactly.

*Q: And then to help design it?*

VANCE: Yes. And they asked for more recommendations, and more details, and more ideas from us which we gave them. After we talked to them, we would go back and discuss the information they requested. And I think that was very important, and it was

difficult to get the appointments because we always had to go when they were free. We went several times, and this took a lot of time.

*Q: As I remember it took at least six months after the Forum report came out.*

VANCE: That's right. We wrote the Forum report in six months, presented it to the Secretary of State, then for another six months he read it and we had appointments with the Director General, and the Under Secretary for Management, and the Personnel Director. There were a lot of people we talked to, and we did this in the State Department.

*Q: My recollection, also, is that our timing was right.*

VANCE: I think our timing was very good. It was in March of 1978 when the Family Liaison Office was established. There was a big ceremony and this was very exciting. We felt that we had accomplished a great deal. They were going to have the Family Liaison Office up on the fourth floor in a dark corner, and we thought ... at that time the State Department was open to the family members, and we thought that the Family Liaison Office should be in a place near the front door of the State Department, near the street entrance, so the women could go in and get the information they needed, and there would be an input both ways. So the Family Liaison Office was finally established where it is now which I think is a very excellent place for it. But now it's difficult for the family members to get in, so they don't drop in the way they used to.

*Q: When you conceived of this office, what was it that you conceived of it doing?*

VANCE: Disseminating information. That this would be a repository of information for the family members so there would be one place where they could go to find out about transfers, home leave, and packing allowances, travel allowances, and that type of thing. And, also, that the Family Liaison Office would tell the officers in the Department of State what our needs were. That if we had special requests, or ideas of things that we thought should be accomplished, should be done, and things to which we were entitled or we

thought we were entitled to that this information should be given to the proper authorities in the State Department. The Family Liaison Office would be our ombudsman. So it would work both ways. We would get the information, and FLO would give the State Department information.

*Q: But women had been liberated in 1972. Why did they need all of this?*

VANCE: They'd been liberated but they didn't have all these privileges that they wanted. Many of the women in the Foreign Service, and the family members, did not know to what they were entitled; that they could have a complete medical examination every two years, etc., and when the children could come, when they could be evacuated for medical reasons, and that type of thing. And, also, about allowances. They wanted to get the information directly rather than getting it through their husbands. They wanted to know to what they were entitled.

*Q: Was there also a sense that while the obligation to do these things, the representational end of being a Foreign Service wife, how you were no longer obliged to be representational the work was still there?*

VANCE: Yes.

*Q: So that was the other half of it?*

VANCE: That was the other half. And that is something that is very difficult to resolve. I don't think it has been resolved yet because the representational work has to go on. It's very difficult for the officer who has a full time job to manage the representational work. And then, also, the wife can get to know the other women of the country, and I think that's very important, and that projects the image of the United States. And, I think, the State Department should use the wives more than they do now, or give them more credit. I think a lot of women have done this just out of the goodness of their hearts. Their work has not been recognized

*Q: Do you remember some of the complexities of getting the Department to realize that they really needed to do this Family Liaison Office?*

VANCE: No. I think that Secretary Vance was very enthusiastic about the idea. I think he realized that the morale in the posts was falling down, and that something should be done.

*Q: How long did the Forum...*

VANCE: It's still working on problems that weren't solved; such as paying the wives for representational work. That is something that is very difficult and probably will never be resolved. And to encourage the Talent Skills Bank to be used more than it is, to have more up-to-date information in the Family Liaison Office. And then we now have Community Liaison Offices in, I think, 160 posts or something like that. It's just amazing. So when the women get to the post they can go in there and get very detailed information.

*Q: It was not just that this office needed to be established, but that it needed to be a paid position.*

VANCE: Yes, oh yes.

*Q: And a fairly senior paid position.*

VANCE: And a senior paid position. And that is true because to begin with they were going to have it a Class IV, and I think now it's a Class III, or it was from the very beginning but they did up the classification for the director of the Family Liaison Office.

*Q: Did you sit on the committee that helped choose the first Director?*

VANCE: Yes, but not on succeeding committees. Janet Lloyd was chosen to be the first director of the Family Liaison Office, and there were several people who applied with

excellent qualifications. It was a very, very difficult choice. But we weren't the only ones on the committee. There were people from the State Department Personnel Office.

I think there was a panel of ten, and Lesley and I were two members of the panel of ten. There were very interesting women who applied for the position — well qualified women.

*Q: How long did you stay on as chairman of the Forum after that?*

VANCE: For two years all together. I started in August of 1976 and then I was no longer chairman in August of 1978. So I served two years.

*Q: You started with this and you ended very shortly after it was finished. What happened to all the paper responses?*

VANCE: I don't know where they are.

*Q: It's a gold mine for someone.*

VANCE: I know, I know. I just don't know. I think I probably turned them over to the new chairman.

*Q: Who succeeded you?*

VANCE: I can't remember.

*Q: Well, its been a long time.*

VANCE: Maybe it was Merle Stein.

*Q: I think it was. Would you like to talk a little bit about some of the women who were on your committee?*

VANCE: I thought it was a very interesting group of women. Mavis Barrett, Jessie Bartlett — she is no longer living but she was a lawyer and she did a lot for the Woman in Transition, telling them about their rights and how to go about getting a divorce.

*Q: Don't I remember that a number of the committees, and that one in particular, sort of took on a life of their own?*

VANCE: They did, and at the Foreign Service Institute there were seminars about legal responsibilities.

*Q: Then that committee then went on to...*

VANCE: Jessie Bartlett chaired that committee.

*Q: ...went on to get some legislation through the Hill.*

VANCE: Exactly.

*Q: ...that protected the rights of...*

VANCE: ...and she was a lawyer so she was very, very good about that. But she also had to work through the State Department.

*Q: What about Mavis Barrett? Tell me a little bit about her.*

VANCE: Mavis is about my age; she's married to Bob Barrett, and they're presently in Djibouti. He is the ambassador to Djibouti. Mavis is a writer, and she's an artist, and she is a very talented and interesting woman. Cynthia Chard was responsible for the Talent Skills Bank, and Virginia Egan and Janet Halley and Mary Holmes, Janet Kennedy and Stephanie Smith Kinney — Stephanie is now a Foreign Service Office — and Alice Lowenthal — Alice's husband was in AID — were also members of the committee. We

tried to have people not only from the State Department, but from the other agencies too, because they would be included in the Family Liaison Office.

*Q: What was the tricky business about singles?*

VANCE: They were included too.

*Q: But they didn't feel like it, if I remember.*

VANCE: No, I think that's true, because the Forum Report was for family members and if a woman is a Foreign Service Officer, or a Foreign Service Staff Officer, we thought it was another category because she got her information directly from the State Department. Whereas we never got the information directly from the State Department, we got it all indirectly and many times we didn't get it at alt. That was one of the things the women complained about. So this was the report on the concerns of Foreign Service spouses and families.

*Q: If you look back on your whole time in the Foreign Service, is being involved in this one of the things that gives you the most satisfaction?*

VANCE: I think so, I really do because I felt we accomplished a lot. It was fun to be involved in something like this in the United States. We'd been gone for 12 years and when we came back I was adjusting to being home. All these interesting things had happened when I hadn't been here. I was trying to catch up and I thought, “This is very, very interesting.” And I've always liked working with younger women and finding out how they think, what their problems are, and how they think the problems should be solved. And many times the problems of older women are different.

*Q: They start from a different...*

VANCE: ... a different perspective all together. The young women's problems are different because it's more difficult for them economically. I think a lot of young women are

working because they need the money — or the family needs the money. It isn't just the satisfaction of a career. But also the women were having more careers, and they didn't want to be just family members or wives.

*Q: As you have watched the Foreign Service ... then when you retired from the Forum Committee, did you sort of step back and not be so involved in the Foreign Service things.*

VANCE: Exactly, because Sheldon retired in 1977 and I felt that the women whose husbands were still in the Foreign Service were the ones to make the decisions. And that it was no longer necessary ... that I wouldn't have the contribution to make that I had made. I wanted to make a contribution at the end of Sheldon's career. But then afterwards I think someone else could do it more effectively.

*Q: But nonetheless you have watched the Foreign Service now over 40 years. What would you say are the major changes that you've seen — good changes, and bad changes.*

VANCE: I think that many times the wives no longer accompany their husbands to post, and I think that is a big mistake. I think the State Department is losing out on it, but I also think that the families are losing out because if you're married you have to stick together, I think, instead of having long periods of separation. I think it's great for the woman to be able to work overseas. But if she can't work, then there are a lot of other interesting things she can do. She can take university correspondence courses to enhance her qualifications for employment.

Fifteen years ago being chairman of the Forum Committee was considered a revolutionary role. I got into it quite by chance because I was the second vice president of AAFSW. Lesley Dorman, the president, asked if I would be the chairman of the committee, and I thought this would be very interesting to do. I was really brought along by the enthusiasm of the young women who wanted changes. They were the ones who persuaded me to go ahead and fight for what they wanted.

*Q: And persuaded you for the rightness of what they were talking about.*

VANCE: Exactly. I knew this was true because of my experience in the Foreign Service, and I felt the same way they did with many of their concerns. But I don't think I would have thought of this myself.

*Q: Would you have gotten involved in it if you hadn't been here in Washington?*

VANCE: I don't think so. I think that because of my experience in Kinshasa and being an ambassador's wife, I think this made a difference. I understand the Foreign Service very well after all the years.

***

BIOGRAPHIC DATA

Spouse: Sheldon B. Vance

Spouse Entered Service: November 1942Left Service: April 1977You Entered Service: SameLeft Service: Same

Status: Spouse of retired AEP

Posts: 1942-46Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 1946-49Nice, France 1949-51Martinique, French West Indies 1951-54Washington, DC 1954-58Brussels, Belgium 1958-62Washington, DC 1962-66Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 1966-67Washington, DC 1967-69Fort Lamy, Chad 1969-74Kinshasa, Zaire 1974-77Washington, DC

Spouse's Position: Junior Economic Analyst; Vice Consul, Consul, Political Counselor, DCM, Ambassador, Executive Director President's Cabinet Committee on International Narcotics Control

## Library of Congress

Place and Date of birth: Blue Earth, Minnesota; December 25, 1916

Maiden Name: Jean Chambers

Parents:

Winslow C. Chambers, Doctor of Medicine

Anna Anderson Chambers

Schools (Prep, University): AB, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota

Date and Place of Marriage: December 28, 1939; Blue Earth, MinnesotaProfession: Foreign Service wife

Children:

Robert Clarke Vance

Stephen Baird Vance

Overseas Positions: Rio de Janeiro - Taught English as a Second Language to Brazilian women at USIS Worked as a volunteer for American Red Cross. This was during World War II.

Brussels - Member of Board of American Women's Club of Brussels. Responsible for writing, editing and publishing a date book on Belgian chateau for American Women's Club of Brussels.

Addis Ababa - Vice Chairman of the Committee for the U.S. Booth at the Ethiopian Red Cross Bazaar. Was Vice Chairman for 3 years. Organized group of American women to work at the Leprosarium just outside Addis Ababa. We supervised hand exercises for children who had had the tendons of their fingers operated on. The tendons were

curled up because of leprosy. Our presence at the leprosarium helped dispel the stigma connected with this disease. Taught English classes at the Addis Ababa School for Adult Women. Worked with group of Ethiopian women to organize a “Fancy Fair” to raise money to support the School for Adult Women.

Fort Lamy, Chad - Worked with Chadian women in a Chadian Kindergarten. This included ordering supplies for the school and also for a handcraft project of Chadian women. I got to know the Director and the teachers of the school very well. I again taught English as a Second Language at the USIS Library.

Kinshasa - In Chad (1967-69) and the Zaire ((1969-74) my husband was ambassador. The demands and responsibilities of being an ambassador's wife are great. It is a full time position.

Volunteer Positions held in Washington, DC: AAFSW Second Vice President 1976-78; AAFSW Chairman of Forum Committee on Concerns of Foreign Service Women and Families, 1976-78 Volunteer Positions at Post: See attached list.

Honors (Scholastic, FS related): Certificate of Appreciation from Secretary of State Cyrus Vance for work on the first Forum Committee including the Report on Concerns of Foreign Service Women and Families which led to the establishment of the Family Liaison Office.

End of interview